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PINK FURNITURE

A. E. COPPARD

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PINK FURNITURE

By the Same Author

THE BLACK DOG
CLORINDA WALKS IN HEAVEN
ADAM AND EVE AND PINCH ME
FISHMONGERS FIDDLE
THE FIELD OF MUSTARD
SILVER CIRCUS
COLLECTED POEMS

PINK FURNITURE

A Tale for Lovely Children with Noble Natures

BY

A. E. COPPARD

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THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

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Author's Note

SOME of the characters in this book are almost fictitious, but most are merely true. If any one wants the law of me for this, I should not care to go to prison as I do not think I could put up with it.

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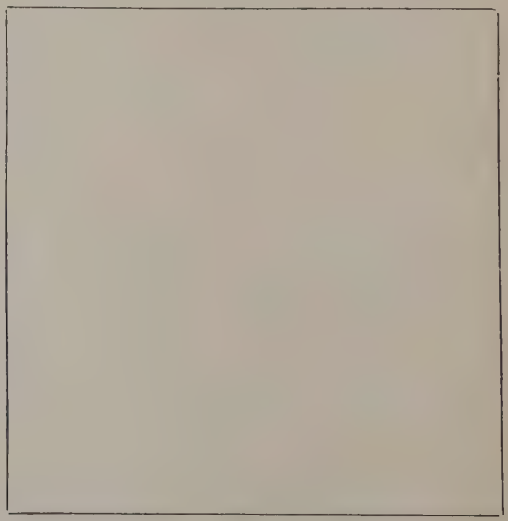
PINK FURNITURE

CHAPTER I

THIS IS THE BEGINNING

ONCE there was a boy called Toby Tottel. This little boy was sometimes bad, of course, certainly; but once people start being very good it is hard to keep them from becoming too good. He was called Toby Tottel because that was his right name, and he lived with his aunt and uncle, whose name was Notright, on a nice verdant common where it was bright as a looking-glass all day long and warm as a new loaf. The birds sang, but often you could not hear the birds very well, because some people would come beating their common carpets there; and sometimes you could not see what an uncommon common it was, because people hung their common washing there too. So Toby Tottel was getting tired of living in that place, as it was becoming untidy and quite unbearable, and he resolved to go and seek his fortune far out in the world, because he was poetic. He was quite quite poetic. He was a better poetic than Lord B—— or Percy S—— or Robert B—— or old W. W——, in fact much better, as you would

have seen for yourselves later on, even if I had not mentioned it now. Resolved for to go and seek his fortune as soon as he could make up his mind and have a good quarrel with his aunt, who was a lady with thumpy hands and noways particular. Seek his fortune far out in the world, anywhere from the Persian Gulf to the Pool of London, or even in the Desert of Arabia, which has plenty of open space and is quite tidy, as you can well see from this map of it.



ARABIA DESERTA.

Far out in the world he would go, as soon as he had said good-bye to Bridget, the girl who lived next door; and he was not going to hunt bison or

knacker about with whales and Red Indians. No, he was going to be . . . Well, first shall I tell you what he was like? He was just a little boy with black curly hair, plum-coloured eyes, skin like a mushroom, and a smuggler's hat with a tassel. And shall I tell you what Bridget was like? Well, she was a little girl with flaxen hair and haughty behaviour, just because her father had a business and no shop, whereas Toby's uncle had a shop but no business and on the door was a notice plate: HERE LIVES A TAILOR.

One day as Bridget was going past the Notrights' door she asked Toby Tottel: 'Why do you have pink furniture in your house?'

And Toby said: 'Our furniture is not pink.'

'Oh, but it is!' retorted Miss Bridget. 'I think you will find it so.' Her other name was Balaclava, but she must not be blamed for that.

Toby said: 'It is not pink at all.'

'Well,' continued Bridget, 'it looks pink. Why is that, then?'

'Listen. I will tell you,' replied Toby.

'Please explain it to me,' said Miss Balaclava, 'because I should rather very much like to know the displanation of this pinkness.'

'Yes,' Toby said. 'I will explain it. Furniture is not often made pink, but when it is made pink it is very unreal, and it is only allowed for gentlemen who have got noble natures. In the king's palace

the furniture is a sort of pink, and all the shovels are made of gold.'

'But you have not told me,' said Bridget angrily, 'why the furniture in your house is so pink!'

'I did,' Toby cried; 'but you didn't listen to me. You are very rude.'

'No, but you did not tell me,' Bridget protested.

'Isn't it rude not to listen?' Toby sternly asked.

'I did listen. I harked hard, but you did not tell me.'

'And besides that,' said Toby, 'our furniture is not a bit pink, and it is not pink at all.'

'Oh, but it is,' Bridget declared; 'it is very pink.'

So he began to despise her, and he would not speak to her about any more furniture then, but they walked all over the common together, and he gave her a bouquet made of furze bloom. It smelt very precious, like the inside of a cokernut, but Bridget pricked her nose in it and was annoyed again, so she said:

'What is this for?'

And Toby said: 'It is for my lovely.'

'What is my lovely?' asked Bridget.

Toby continued: 'And you must give me one in return because I gave you this one.'

'I cannot do so,' Bridget said, 'because we have not got some flowers in our garden.'

'Bo!' Toby cried mockingly. 'You haven't got a garden at all.'

Bridget said: 'That is why we have not got some flowers in it.'

'Silly!' scoffed Toby.

'Well, but I'm not properly silly,' said the little girl.

'Oh, aren't you? What is your garden made of?' he inquired.

'Our garden is made of pure ground,' Bridget explained. 'And we do not have any washing in our garden, because a garden is not pure if you have washing hanging all into it.'

Toby thought this over for a moment or two and then said:

'We don't have washing in our garden either.'

'Oh, but you do have,' the little girl declared.

'Not at all; never,' he denied it hotly.

'Yes,' Bridget gleefully cried, 'your garden is filled up with washing.'

'No,' roared Toby.

'Yes.' She kept on repeating it, 'Yes, yes, yes,' until he was in a purple rage, and shouted, 'Stop, you sneak, stop, or I will curse you!'

So she stopped, and he made her sit down while he pulled out an exercise book and a pencil and wrote a poem, and when he had written this poem he read it out to her:

'There is washing on the clothes-line,
But the washing isn't ours:

We don't like washing,
We don't take washing,
We don't do any washing;
There is a way,
A better way.
To spend the happy hours,
But we don't think we're better than our neighbours.

There is washing on the clothes-line,
But the line isn't ours:
We don't wash washing,
We don't care for washing,
We don't go in for washing;
There is a way,
A better way,
To spend the happy hours,
And we don't think we're better than our neighbours.

There is washing on the clothes-line,
But the clothes aren't ours,
And it isn't our washing:
We don't want washing,
We can't bear washing,
We don't believe in washing;
There is a way,
A better way,
To spend the happy hours,
So you needn't think you're better than your neighbours.'

When he had finished reading it out to Bridget, the verdant common had grown sweet and calm, the larks piped on high like half a dozen whistles, and every furze bush was a loaf of gold.

'Now do you understand?' Toby asked sharply.

Bridget said 'No.'

'Why not?'

'You see,' explained Bridget carefully, 'it is because your garden is so full of washing.'

'If you say that again,' said the angry little boy, 'I shall screw your head off and give it to the snake.'

'What snake?' asked Bridget.

'Well, there is a snake over there under a bush, where his den is. I saw him yesterday, and I wrote a bit of poetry about him. I'll read it to you.'

'Yes,' agreed Bridget, 'as long as it is not all about the washing in your garden.'

Master Tottel gazed sullenly at the flaxen-haired child, and then he began:

'The Serpent

'I met a snake,
Long,
Lean,
Sly,
Slow;
Then it ran wriggledy-piggledy into a bush.

I
Crept
By,
Tip
Toe
Tip tip toe
Tip tip tippety toe.
Tippetty tippetty tippetty tippetty toe!'

'But why?' asked the puzzled little girl, 'why do you call it The Serpent?'

Toby coughed and gnawed the end of his pencil for some moments.

'Because,' he said at last, 'a serpent is a snake that repents.'

Bridget asked him: 'Repents what?'

'Beg your pardon?' said Toby.

'Repents what?' repeated Bridget.

'Oh,' laughed he, 'you can't repent what. You can repent something, or you can repent, but you can't repent what; it is very silly.'

Bridget eyed him with suspicion. 'What does it repent something?' she asked.

'Oh dear! Oh dear!' exclaimed the young poet, 'you do not seem to understand the plain language.'

'I beg you to excuse me,' retorted Miss Balaclava, 'but I understand very exorbitant.'

So then they went home in separation, but he was so curious to know more about pink furniture, he thought is so poetic, that when he reached the house he stared

steadily all round about. Not a scrap of the furniture was pink. And then he looked out into the garden, but became pale and had to turn his eyes away in very shame.

'Why don't we have some pink furniture?' he asked his aunt gloomily.

Immediately his aunt turned pale too, pale as a candle, and said:

'Boy, beware of past, present, and future; what have you done with your pencil-case?'

'Yes, aunt,' he said; 'but why don't we have some pink furniture?'

She pressed her hand to her side and said:

'Enough, enough, Toby Tottel; my heart is like a water-clock.'

So then he guessed there was something about this pink furniture that she wished to conceal from him, and he wanted to know it more than ever, but his aunt paid no attention to his clamour. Day in, day out, he would ply her with questions: 'Aunt, what is pink furniture? Where is pink furniture? Why don't we have some pink furniture?' and so on. But all she would say was: 'Boy, beware of yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow!' Or she would press her side and whisper: 'Enough; my heart is like a water-clock.'

Often he brooded upon this, and he even asked Bridget again, but she only said that the furniture in his house was all pink already, only the washing in the garden was not pink.

So he began to despise her.

CHAPTER II

MR. ADHEMAR AND THE TWICE WOMAN

THEN he thought about it some more in other ways, and he asked his schoolmaster, Mr. Adhemar, if he could inform him. Mr. Adhemar was a little bouncing man, with rather more hair on his eyebrows than grew on his poll. It was so long, in fact, that it twined in his bottle-green spectacles like ivy over the parsonage windows. He wore a bobtail coat, pepper-coloured trunks, and his shoes were made of sharkskin.

The schoolmaster smiled nastily and said: 'Boy! What have you done with your lessons? I shall want them all at once, at once, all the answers to everything At once. Or I shall analyse you backwards and parse the remains.'

' "Can you do sums?" Mr. Adhemar said;
"Can you do sums straight out of your head?
With a nick nack no, like a member of the staff?
The half of a quarter is the quarter of a half!

Can you do grammar with nouns and verbs,
And make up prose about animals and herbs,
Like *A badger loves sand*, or *A fish loves water*,
And the quarter of a half is the half of a quarter?" '

But Toby's mind was so full of this other matter that none of his lessons would come right; you know, THEY WOULD NOT COME RIGHT – in fact, they were wrong; the questions baffled him, his answers went topsy-turvy, and even if the questions were very simple, like, *How far can a smelt swim without overhearing a camel's conversation?* Toby would just answer 'Pink!' And when at last Mr. Adhemar inquired very politely: 'Do you know what I am about to do to you, sullen Tottel?' the sullen Tottel could only utter the one word, 'Furniture!'

Whereat the schoolmaster roared:

'Come forth, the blockhead Tottel!' and Toby went forth, and Mr. Adhemar gave him what-for with the chill off!

As the schoolmaster was passing the time of day in this pleasant fashion, who should peep in at the open window but the Widow Twice, who had had twins twice, and buried some husbands twice.

'Bless my bones!' exclaimed the schoolmaster. 'Do my eyes see you?'

Mrs. Twice winked both her eyes, one after the other. Mr. Adhemar released the culprit Toby and stalked across to the window, where the widow stood, shouldering his cane as he did so like a captain carrying a sword.

'Good morrow, dame,' said the gallant master. 'How do you find yourself?'

'So-so,' Mrs. Twice said, shaking her head dolefully.

Mr. Adhemar leaned his elbows on the sunny window-sill and crossed his legs: 'I vow that my eyes have seldom, or never, rested on a more elegant object.'

'Tut tut,' said the lady, but then she said, 'Go on.' Indeed, she said it once more than once.

'I engage my soul they have not, I engage it.'

The schoolmaster seized the hand of Mrs. Twice, and while imprinting a kiss upon her freckled fingers he perceived that she had been cooking some fish.

'Bless my bones,' he cried, 'I will engage that you have a salmon grilled for dinner!'

'Indeed I have, I have indeed,' assented Mrs. Twice, with a knowing smile.

'Basted with cream, I presume to advise?'

'"Tis so, 'tis so.'

'And garnished with honey, I venture to believe?'

'For two, for two,' sighed the Widow Twice.

The schoolmaster rolled his eyes: 'Yum, yum! Have you a guest, madam?'

'No, no,' said the Twice Woman, shaking her head dolefully again. 'No, no.'

Mr. Adhemar tickled her under the chin with his cane, the very cane that had just been tickling

'Mr. Adhemar gave him what for with the chill off! Who should peep in at the window but the Widow Twice.'

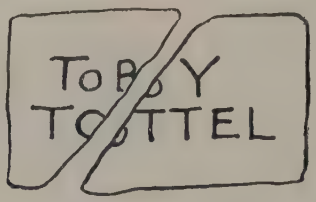
Toby Tottel. 'Would it suit you, madam,' he asked softly, 'if I came to dinner?'

'Tip-top!' exclaimed Mrs. Twice, but nearly falling into a slight swoon.

'I will be there, my good dame. I engage my soul to be there,' he cried, 'on the stroke precisely. Fare you well for a while.'

'Ta-ta,' said the Widow Twice. 'Bye-bye!'

Mr. Adhemar sauntered back to his desk and gave Toby Tottel a brisk swish that almost cut him in half like this:



'Boy!' he bellowed, 'you may go.'

CHAPTER III

FAREWELL AND ADIEU

NOW Toby was a boy of humble station but proud spirit, and so he resolved never to return to school, but to go forth into the world and think about Pink Furniture for hours at a stretch, and seek for nothing but Pink Furniture until he found some. Home he went and said good-bye to his aunt, but he could not say good-bye to his uncle, because he was gone where he always was – and that was where he never ought to have been. Said his aunt to him:

'Where are you bound for, so slick and so smart, Toby Tottel, if I may inquire?'

'I am bound, aunt, for the city of Pink Furniture.'

'And where is that?'

'Aunt, I do not know, but I shall find it.'

'Well, may fortune have a fit!' she cried. 'Begone! Let goodness be your guide, and beware of past, present, and future.' So saying, she gave him a penny farthing and a clean pocket-handkerchief.

Then he said good-bye to his little cousin Janey-Loo, who was very small and fond of playing with mud.

'Where you going?' she asked.

He said: 'Far away.'

'Will you send me sumpin'?'

He said: 'Yes, Janey-Loo. What shall I send you? What would you like?'

But Janey-Loo was such a fathead that she could not make up her mind whether she wanted him to send her a parrot made of wool or a pair of aluminium scissors; as it was, she took such a long time thinking of the things that she liked, but not well enough to want, and things that she did not want, but would like to have, that Toby had time to write a poem in his exercise book all about Janey-Loo, and this is it:

'I don't like oxes and I don't like hogs,
Same with caterpillars and great big frogs;
If an owl came to visit,
I should perish in my fear –
But I DO like a little pig's tail!

I love my pussy and I love our cow,
Same with our canary and brave bow-wow;
If a dove came to visit,
I should bid it welcome here –
But I DO hate a great big snail!'

So then off he goes out into the great wide world, and he had not gone far when he met Bridget Balaclava, and his heart almost stopped beating because he had clean forgotten her, and now here she was, and he remembered her, and he was quite fond of her again. Toby told her where he

was bound for, and she told him he was a stupid thing.

'For why?' he asked her.

'Because,' Bridget said, 'all the Pink Furniture is here.'

'No,' Toby denied it.

'Your house is full of it,' she insisted.

'No,' Toby denied it.

'As full,' she continued, 'as your garden is of washing.'

So Toby began to despise her again very much; but as soon as she saw the way the wind blew, she put her arms fondly around him, and kissed him, and said:

'Good-bye, Toby dear. Will you send me something?'

'Yes,' he promised. 'What shall I send you?'

And she said: 'Send me a letter.'

'What about?' asked Toby.

Bridget sighed, and declared he grew more stupid every day, but she kissed him again before she ran away.

'I love my love,
But my love I leave;
All things above
I love my love.
I am bound to rove,
She is bound to grieve;
I love my love,
But my love I leave.'

CHAPTER IV

STINKER

THEN he went on, and on and on he went until he came to the house of the Baldheaded Woman who was renowned for her surpassing wisdom. But she was absent now; only her son was left at home, and his name was Stinker. It was a good name for him. He was a lanky man, with long black gloves and a very high beaver hat, and he always walked backwards and never saw anybody coming. Whenever it rained his boots became dusty, and in times of drought he carried an open umbrella and got wet as a herring. Very often he talked backwards, and then not a soul could understand him. 'How is your good mother to-day?' you might ask him, and he would reply, 'Not so very ill, I am sorry to say.' The Baldheaded Woman's house had a roof so low that you could lean on the roof with your elbow in the chimney-pot, and Toby had to crawl in on his hands and knees.

'Hi, ho!' growled Stinker, when he saw Toby crawling in; 'you don't want anything, I can smell.'

The boy sat down on the floor of the dim little house that was full of cobweb curtains and the

'Stinker was a lanky man with long black gloves and a very high beaver hat, and he always walked backwards.'

perfume of glue, and he told the lanky man that he was in search of the place where Pink Furniture was to be had, and Stinker said:

'Gammon! You don't go there; you always come from it.'

'But,' argued Toby, 'you can't even come from it until you have gone there.'

'It is the same thing,' said Stinker; 'when you come from it you are going there.'

'Would you mind telling me the direction to it?' said Toby politely.

'I don't give directions,' the man replied.

'But you could tell me where I would get some directions,' persisted Toby. 'You see, I have run away to go into the wide world, and I must really ask you to be good enough to assist me.'

'Have you looked in the *Open and Ask Me*?' inquired Stinker.

'No,' Toby said; 'what is that?'

'It is the Book of Wisdom.'

'I am very fond of books,' declared Toby, 'but I have never heard of that one. Will you show it to me, please?'

'Haven't got it,' growled Stinker.

'What is it like?' Toby asked.

'Oh,' said Stinker, 'it has an average smell and a hollow look.'

'What colour is it?'

'It has no colour.'

'That sounds like a very strange book,' cried Toby; 'what is it all about?'

'Nothing,' Stinker replied.

'Nothing?' echoed Toby.

'Nothing at all,' Stinker said.

'Then what is the good of a book like that, Mr. Stinker?'

'The only good in it,' Stinker explained, 'is what you put in it yourself.'

'I'd like to see that book. Where could I see that book?' asked Toby, with great eagerness.

'You will never see such a book, Toby Tottel—never!'

'Why not?'

'Because,' Stinker solemnly averred, 'there is no such book, there never has been, there never will be.'

Then Toby guessed that this was something Stinker did not wish him to see, and therefore he wanted to see it more than ever, and he made up his mind to seek the *Open and Ask Me*, because he was sure that in it he would find the whole history of this Pink Furniture.

'Are you going yet? No!' exclaimed Stinker.

'Yes; I must push on into the wide world,' Toby said.

'Then you can stay here with me,' said Stinker, 'and come again to-morrow.'

Toby explained that he could stay no longer.

'Then,' said Stinker, 'I will give you some good advice. Listen!'

He sat down for half an hour but did not utter a word, and when Toby saw that the lanky man was fast asleep he crawled quietly out of the door and ran off as fast as he could go.

CHAPTER V

THE SINFUL MILLER

ON he went, and he went on and on until he came to a turnpike gate, where he met an old bent man in a white hat and jacket who was sitting in a cart behind a fat black mare. On the cart was painted:

PEDGELL COBBS COBBS
MILL.

'Jump up,' the old man said, and Toby clambered into the cart beside him, and thus they travelled on past quite a lot of scenery.

'Where are you bound for?' inquired the old bent man.

Toby explained that he did not yet know his destination.

'Ah,' sighed old Pedgell, 'I wish I did not know where I was going to, either. But I do. We shall be there before nightfall. It would be a longish way for a man to have to travel to his work; I mean to say, when he got home to his supper he would be glad to swallow it. 'Tis a longish way. But there, the world is full of evil and man is a sinful animal. There are no two ways about it, ye know; the

wicked flourish, and the good fall down like crab-apples and nobody wants them. And if they wanted them, they would not know what to do with them; and if they did anything with them, it would upset their innards – wouldn't it now?'

'Yes,' Toby agreed.

'Have you got good innards, my boy?' inquired old Pedgell.

Toby thought that his innards were very good ones.

'Ah, then,' the old man said, 'you will do what you've a mind to, you will do as you please, whether or no. Lack-o-body! I back there is a power of wickedness in your little innards now, an't there! Get on with you, you black old Belzebub!' he cried to the fat mare, and the mare began to gallop.

'No! Stop, you old Moloch, you! Here we are,' and they drew up at a round white windmill standing on a hillock, with a cot at the side. Toby helped the old man to unharness the mare and put her in the stable. Then they entered the cottage.

'Nobody at home, you see,' sighed the old man as he lit a candle. 'Never is. Never will be now.'

There was a boiling pot on the hearth and old Pedgell Cobbs took some bread from his crock and asked Toby if he wanted any lambs' tails.

'Yes,' Toby said.

'Ah, it's good meat, powerful meat,' mumbled the old man, as he went and forked out some lambs'

tails from the boiling pot and put them on two platters, one for himself and one for Toby.

'What do you say to some small beer?'

Toby nodded brightly, so Pedgell drew some from a cask – a large basin full for himself and a canakin for Toby.

'Hi, hi!' said the miller. 'A blessing on it.'

Then they fell to and ate all the lambs' tails and drank all the small beer.

'Hi, hi!' said Pedgell. 'A thanks on that. Good!'

'Is this all your mill, Mr. Cobbs?' Toby asked him.

'Yes,' answered the old miller, pointing to the right-hand side. 'That's my mill. And there,' pointing to the left, 'is my old mare and my old dog. And here' – he pointed to his bosom – 'am I, and I wish I were at rest, out of it all. Come and help me feed the old mare.'

He took down a lantern from a hook in the ceiling and gave it to the boy, who lit it from the candle, and followed the old man outside. And now it was very dark, but they could see the sails of the mill racked up against the sky, and the sky full of peaceful stars. The cool dark air flowed upon them with a sigh, and the grass underfoot was fragrant with evening's dew.

'Come, my boy,' said the old man, leading the way, and they entered a stable, musty and old, with bits of harness hanging, and trusses of fodder. The boy put the lantern on top of a barrel. In a stall

stood the black mare. Old Pedgell took a sieve of chaff and opened a bin of corn and sprinkled handfuls of oats over the chaff. Then he tottered with it towards the horse.

'Ah,' he sighed as he went, 'I wish I were done with it all. I've been a sinful man. Here you are, old gal.' He emptied the sieve of corn into the trough. 'She's been a good old faithful mare. Tried to kill me lots of times; bit me, kicked me, and thrown here and there, but I deserved it all, and we are the best of friends. Oh, she knew! Now a drink of water.'

He took a pail of water from a corner, and the mare drank some.

'Fetch me they lambs' bones for my old dog, boy.' And Toby ran back into the cottage for the bones, and gave them to the dog, who had a head like a sheep and a tail like a fox – and that was the character of him.

'Now a bunch a hay,' said the old man. Taking a fork he gathered a bundle of hay upon it, and tottered once more to the mare's rack, carrying the fork of hay before him as if it was a priestly banner.

'Eighty years old, I am, and every one of those years has been as full of sins as a hive is of bees. Oh dear me! Every night as I lay abed I think of all that wickedness. It's terrible. I hope it will all be forgiven, but I dunno, I dunno. Now a bit of straw.

He carried a fork full of straw in the same way, and continued:

'I've been a wicked man, terrible wicked. And you will be a wicked man, too, some day. Ay? Won't you now? Course you will, my boy, you can't help it, howsoever you be.'

After they had fed the horse and the dog, Toby and Pedgell went back to the cottage and sat by the fire. Toby saw a gun hung on a rack above the fireplace.

'Yes, that's my gun, my boy, but I can't use it now. I am like old Barty Crow. Did you ever hear the story of old Crow's gun? No? Well, I will tell it to you.'

CHAPTER VI

OLD CROW'S GUN

BARTY CROW was born with rich money in his pockets, so to speak, for he was an only child and had nothing to do all his life but to take his ease, and become a great man. Before he was fit to go to school, his mother died through eating eel pie, and then his father went and tumbled down a chalk quarry just as Barty came of age, so everything else came just right for him. He lived in a mansion with a lot of servants, and he was not married, he would never marry a soul; but, of course, everybody did whatever Barty wanted. He was fond of all manner of luxuries and all manner of sports, but the thing he was most fond of was to shoot birds with his gun. And, oh, he was a great sportsman, terrible fond of birds. He would shoot them by the dozen, by the score, he would pop them off in their hundreds, and there was no bird that dared come nigh him, not within a mile of Barty Crow, not even a nightingale. He conquered them all! Ah, he loved birds, there was no trouble he would not take to come at a bird, and when he had come at him, Barty would shoot him. A lovely shot that man was! Famous all over the country, and everybody was proud to know such a great man.

Day after day he would drive out in his carriage-and-pair to the coverts where his keepers had told him to go, and he would have a man to carry his gun, and another to carry his bag, and Barty would sit on a little chair behind a hedge while twenty or thirty men would drive all the cunning birds up to where he was sitting very comfortable, waiting for them, and then it would be Bang! bang! And if ever a bird got away, Barty would shake his fist at him and shout, 'Hi, hi, my cocky, I owe you one for that!' The dogs would run and bring back the dead birds, and the man with the bag would put them in a sack, and Barty would hand his gun to another man to load up for him again, and so he would go on shooting and shooting until he was tired of shooting. Then he would drive home in his carriage-and-pair. Oh, my gracious! it was a gentleman's life he had, that noble sporting man. But there was a certain wild bird which Barty Crow never could manage to come up with, and that was a great white bird with a long blue tail, nearly as big as an owl. Some said it was a yoffle, because it had a woodpecker's laugh; but that was no yoffle. That bird must have been fifty years old at least. All his life, Barty tried to shoot that same bird. Time and again he would fire good straight shots plunk at the bird, but it seemed as if it was charmed, for he never could kill it no matter how he tried, and he tried often. Bird would fly away laughing at him.

Time and time again Barty would hear the cry. 'Mark over! Yoffle!' and he would shout, 'Ha, you devil! Now I've got you!' But he never had got him. Time and time again that white yoffle bird would just swoop over, and before you could say 'Lobster' there he was, gone again!

Well, in time, some misfortunes happened to Mr. Crow and he lost nearly all his riches, and when he grew old he was what you might call a poor man with only a little bit of a farm. Still, he always carried his old gun about with him, and went on shooting the birds. But by then the white yoffle bird with the blue tail had got to be more audacious; yes, it would pop over a hedge before the poor old gentleman was ready for him, and old Barty would confound his impudence, and curse his own plaguy old arms and legs.

'Ah!' he would say, 'sport an't what it used to be in my day!'

But now this white yoffle bird would never leave him alone. Poor old Barty Crow! It used to haunt him, and tease him. Ah! wherever he went this bird would be sure to rise up of a sudden with such a deuce of a clatter that it frightened the poor old man and made him tremble. He would shake his old fist at the place where the bird had been, and swear.

'Ha, you devil! Just you wait. I'll pop a hole in you. You look out. I'll blow you to bits!'

But the old yoffle bird was crafty as sin. It was charmed, you know, and took no more notice of old Barty than you would take of a bushel-basket; and old Barty got into such sweats about it that whenever he saw a white hen in his own rickyard he would fetch his gun to his shoulder, thinking it was that yoffle bird. As often as not he would pull the trigger and kill his own chicken. Of course that made him waxier than ever. He stormed and raged, he did.

'I'll catch him alive O. I'll fill him up with gunpowder and then I'll burst him! I will, I will. I'll tackle him!'

And one day Barty was walking quietly round his yard, and he saw this white yoffle bird just snoozing beside one of his corn-ricks.

'Give me my gun!' he bawls out, and he went and fetched his gun. But as soon as he moved towards that bird it just toddled on round the rick, so as Barty could not get a fair shot at him. Poor old Barty went scuffling round and round the rick after that knowing bird until he was so giddy he had to give up and go indoors for a swig of spirits.

Next day the same thing occurred. There was that white yoffle bird lolloping round and round the rick, with old Barty puffing after him, trying to shoot; and all the cocks and hens got in his way, and he kept on tumbling over a faggot or something; but he could not shoot it, he could not, and now

and again the yoffle bird would let out such a cackle at him! I tell you, the way that bird fooled old Barty was a phanomener.

And this caper went on for days and days, for weeks it went on, until at last old Barty knew he would have to devise some scheme or he would go clean daft. So he thought and thought, and then a scheme came into his head like a flash of lightning.

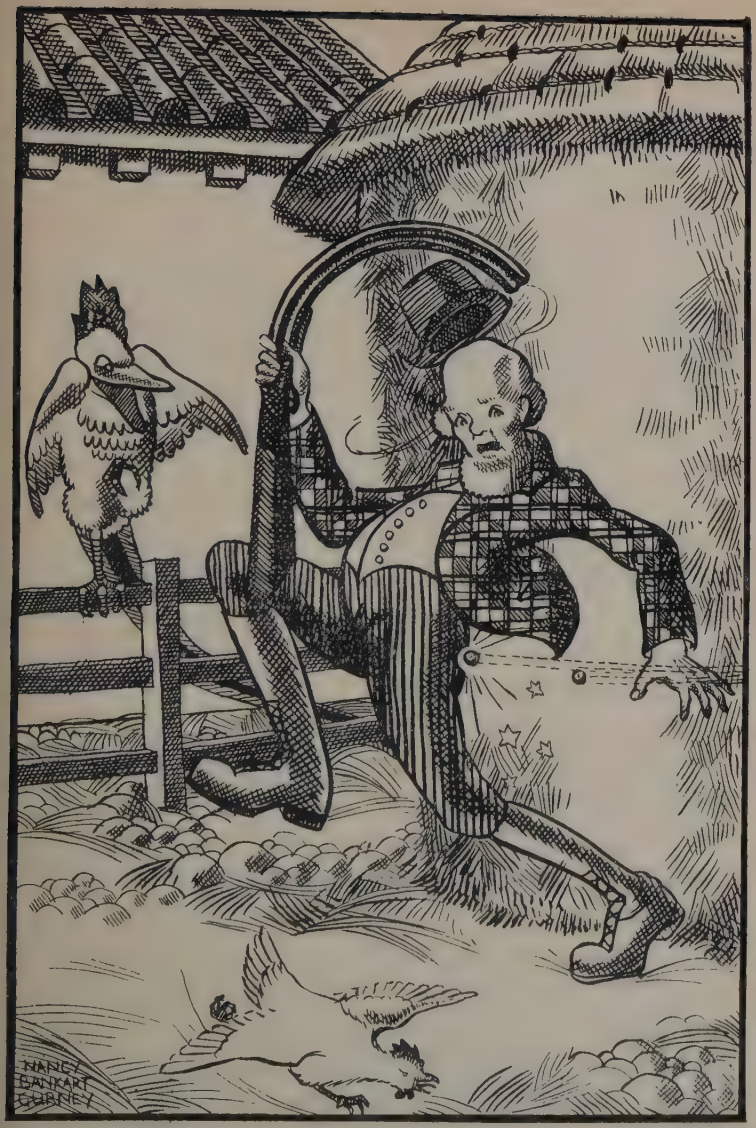
'I got him!' he cries. 'I got him! I have got him now for certain!'

Off to the blacksmith goes he. 'I want my gun bent like so,' he says.

So the blacksmith bends the barrels of his gun in the form of a new moon, so that Barty would be able to shoot round the corners of anything without being seen.

Barty tore off home to his rickyard. 'Now I've got him; I have got him for certain sure!'

There was the white yoffle bird pecking round, and Barty crept right up against the rick, soft as a snake, softly, softly, till he sank down on one knee, poked the barrel round the corner and pulled both triggers: Bang! bang! And lo and behold! the two shots went whizzing round and round the stack like a whirlwind out of his bent gun, until they catched old Barty on his sit-me-down – and that busted him. That was the end of old Barty, and the white yoffle bird – so they say – went to his burial.



'The two shots went round and round the stack like a whirlwind out of his bent gun until they catched old Barty on his sit-me-down.'

CHAPTER VII

THE SINFUL MILLER

UPON finishing the story old Pedgell told Toby he was to sleep on a little bench in the corner. Toby took off his shoes and went there, while the miller, gently groaning, laid himself on a bench in another corner; and the room was in darkness, except for the light flickering feebly in the fire. The boy lay looking at the stars through the window, and sometimes he would hear the old mare snorting the oats out of her nose, or the old man mumbling. Presently the miller asked:

'Are you asleep, my boy?'

'No,' said Toby.

'Nor I, neither,' sighed Pedgell. 'I can't forget things, they weigh on me. The world has changed, it has turned right round; but in one thing it has not changed at all, and that is wickedness. One time you could go to the doings at Stoko Fair. Ah, that was a place for wickedness, if you like! Ha, ha, my goodness! You could have your glass of metheglin and your hog pudding and your cups of peas. I almost got drunk there once, and once I nearly kissed a shoemaker's wife. He, he, my goodness! But she ought to have know'd better. And you

could buy anything in the meat line there from a calf's head to a cage of canaries, but now everything is turned right round. Once I seen a man swallow his own tongue there, and then he would show it to you in a box of matches he had in his pocket; and a lamb with a pony's head that could tell you the time as sure as any clock; and I seen a conjurer man cut off his wife's head with a sword and put it on again backwards. Nothing like that now. Well, I have done my duty, I can't say no more, but I done it. We have all got to do that, my boy, and we are always at it, remember that. If you don't do your duty, you will have to go where good men spit!'

'Where is that, Mr. Cobbs?' Toby asked.

'In the fire, my boy,' chuckled the miller. 'In the fire!'

Toby lay pondering this for some time. Then he said:

'Have you ever seen any Pink Furniture, Mr. Cobbs?'

'Pink!' the miller ruminated. 'Can't call to mind that I ever saw such a thing. No, to be sure, I never did, not pink.'

'Or have you ever read a book called *Open and Ask Me*?'

Mr. Cobbs had often heard of such a book, but he had never read it, he had never come across it. Here the miller yawned, and soon he fell asleep.

Betimes in the morning they were both up and doing. It was a bright, brisk day, and Toby helped old Pedgell to lead the mare to a pond in the meadow; the dog barked about the mill, and the sails went clattering round. Old Pedgell wanted the boy to stay and become apprenticed to him, so that in years to come he might be a millmaster; but Toby told him that he was bound on a journey into the wide world to seek for something; so, after giving him a cup of milk and a scone for breakfast, the old miller wished him joy and a prosperous journey.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FORESTER

TOBY set forth and went travelling with a will over hills and bridges until he came to a forest. The trees swayed their new green leaves in the sunbeams, but all was quiet as a temple. The earth was strewn with dead leaves and moss, and there were hundreds of mouse-holes. By and by he heard a faint sound of music far away, but it grew clearer as he went on, until he could tell that it was a horn blowing Ta-ra ta-ran ta-ra, and the echoes pealed through the forest. Soon it was coming so close to him that Toby hid behind a large tree, and then he saw a great big jolly man with a golden beard, dressed all in green velvet, with a white feather in his cap, come striding through the glades. Sometimes he blew Ta-ra ta-ran ta-ra upon his glistening horn, and sometimes he sang a little song:

'Will you take a sprig of hornbeam?
Will you try a twig of pine?
Or a beam of dusky cedar
That the ivy dare not twine?

My larch is slim and winsome,
There is blossom on the sloe;
Timber tell you, tell you timber,
How the trees do grow!

There are thorns on yonder mountain,
An olive on the crag,
And I leave a knotted thicket
As a chamber for the stag;
Lovely oak and spangled sycamore,
The quince and mistletoe;
Willow will you, will you willow,
How the trees do grow!'

And so the forester came striding nearer and nearer, until all of a sudden he leaped right up into the tree where Toby was standing hidden, and cried:

'Yah ho! Yah ho! You boy, my name is Fella-fungobbelus!'

Toby was so frightened that he took to his heels and flew off hither and yon as fast as wind goes, but he heard the forester roaring 'Yah ho! Yah ho!' and he had only gone a few spans more when the trees all round him thrust down their long boughs to encircle him like a bird in a cage, and when he tried to push the branches aside and escape from them, they benumbed him, and he fell down in a swoon.

He did not stay in the swoon very long, but when

he revived he found himself lying on his back, with his legs and arms tied by great long spines of sweet-briar that had wound themselves all round and round him. So he had to lie quite still until the forester came and caught him, and when the forester had unwound all the briars, he put Toby in a net and slung him over his shoulder, like a rabbit. Off he went then back along the path he had come, and somehow Toby did not mind, for he lay snug in the net and he could see everything, and the forester was a jolly man who kept blowing Ta-ra ta-ran ta-ra on the shining bugle as they travelled along.

'Sing, boy, sing!' he cried, giving Toby a nudge with his elbow, but Toby told him that he did not feel in a singing mood.

'Tush, tush, my pet!' answered the forester, 'you are in good company. Have no fear. You have wandered out into this Warlock Wood, but I will preserve you from all cantrips. Sing, boy, sing! you have a pipe like a wren, I vow.'

So Toby sang:

'The wren has no money,
But feels no care;
She finds good company
Everywhere.

'Little brown fox, lie still in your bury,
The hounds are up and the wind is merry.'

'Well sung, young master!' cried the forester, and he blew Ta-ra ta-ran ta-ra so bravely that every tree waved one of its longest arms in salute to him. And he released Toby from the net and set him on his feet.

'Go we together, kind heart,' he said. 'And as we go you shall tell me why you have set foot in my wood, that is full of enchantments so good and so bad.'

So Toby told him what he was in search of – the Pink Furniture, and the *Book of Wisdom*.

'Ho, ho! I smell a cantrip here,' said the forester, 'for I know nothing of such things. But I bid you go on to Hedgehog Market and there you may have tidings.'

'How shall I get to Hedgehog Market?' asked Toby, 'for I am lost in this forest.'

'Up on my back with you again!' commanded the forester. Toby obeyed, and the forester pressed his horn into his own forehead, and turned himself into a blue unicorn with scarlet hoofs. Away the unicorn flew with Toby on its back, prancing like a roe through the glades, and it did not pause until they had gone fifty miles and come to the borders of the woodland. Then the unicorn stopped, pulled the horn out of its forehead, and turned into the jolly forester once more.

Behind them lay Warlock Wood, and below them was a valley with a shining river and a little town basking in the noon.

'The forester was a jolly man who kept blowing Ta-ra ta-ran ta-ra on the shining bugle as they travelled along.'

'There lies Hedgehog Market,' explained the forester, 'where you may find tidings of the *Book of Wisdom*, but of Pink Furniture I know nothing; such a thing is beyond my contemplation.'

'No,' sighed Toby; 'nobody except Bridget seems to know what it is, but Pedgell told me that he had heard of *Open and Ask Me*.'

'Pedgell!' exclaimed the forester. 'If you mean the miller of Cobbs Mill, I have heard of him. Sit down here and drink a little wine before you go, and eat some pie, and I will then tell you a story about Pedgell Cobbs. What sort of pie would you like, kind heart?'

'Pumpkin pie,' said Toby quickly.

'Excellent!' cried Fellafungobbelus. He cut a turf out of the hillside and stuck it on the point of his knife and offered that to Toby. No sooner did Toby's fingers touch it than it turned into a wedge of most toothsome pie, the pumpkin smooth as butter, and no pips. Fellafungobbelus then cut another wedge for himself, nine time as big, and ate it up in two bites.

'How clever you are,' said Toby, 'to find food on the ground!'

'Oh, but it is not so,' said Fellafungobbelus; 'it is not at all clever. The cow, the badger, the horse, the worm, the ass, the hare, the snake, the sheep all find their food on the ground, and they are not clever at all. It is there, there it is. They walk about

on it all day long, and lie down on it at night to sleep. It is there, there it is, and they know where to find it. Certainly, if an ass or a worm is clever, then I am as clever as a worm or an ass. And did you not see the tiffin plant growing all over Warlock Wood? You must surely have noticed! It looks like a lettuce and tastes like a teapot. Would you like to drink something, kind heart?'

Toby said yes, he would, so Fellafungobbelus gave him his silver horn and said, 'Hold that.' Then he pulled a corkscrew out of the leg of his boot and began to bore and twist it into the turf. By and by he asked: 'Are you ready?' and pulled. There was certainly a noise like a cork, and then Toby saw that the silver horn was full of rich parsnip wine, but he did not see how it got there.

CHAPTER IX

THE FORESTER'S STORY

YOU must understand that many years ago Pedgell Cobbs was a fine young fellow. The mill had been in the hands of his family for as many years as there are leaves on an ash tree, and when Pedgell's father lay dying of inferior blood he said to his son Pedgell:

'My son, the mill is now your property.'

'Thank you, father,' said the dutiful son.

'Take it,' said the dying man, 'and keep it wholesome and bright, clear up rubbish and bury it, and remember to grind no corn that comes from freckled land.'

'Father,' said he, 'I will obey you in every respect.'

'Do so, my son, and all will prosper with you.'

The father then died, and the son became a miller of great renown. No other miller could grind corn as finely as Pedgell Cobbs, and his charges were most reasonable; in fact, they were next to nothing. So famous did he grow, and so rich and so handsome, that he was loved and wooed by all the young maidens, but his heart remained free. Now there was a certain beautiful young woman

named Mopsa, married to an old man named Mopso, who did not treat her well. Mopsa, too, fell in love with the young miller, but he would have nothing to do with her.

One day this fair woman came to him and asked him if he would grind two bags of corn for her. The young miller told her that he could not grind any corn that came from freckled land, but Mopsa vowed to him that her corn was the purest of the pure.

'If that is the case,' said the miller, 'I will grind it.'

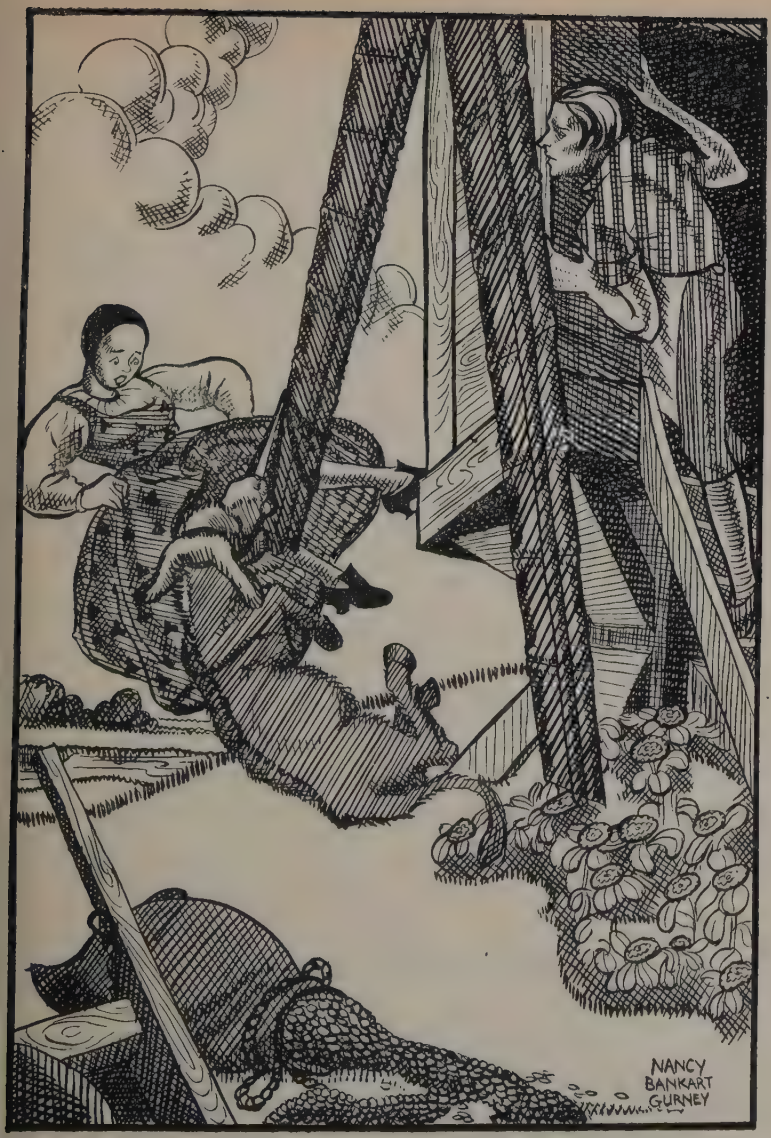
The following day Mopsa drove to the mill in a little yellow cart with blue wheels, drawn by a white jenny donkey, and she had three full sacks in the cart – one a red sack, one a blue sack, and one a black sack. She jumped out of the cart and ran into the mill, in order to make love to the miller. But of course he would have nothing to do with her, and demanded the sacks of corn that he might quickly grind them.

The long sails of the mill were busily turning in the wind, for it was a bright and breezy day. Such long sails they were, that as they came downwards they almost brushed the ground, where the miller had planted a fine bush of marigolds. The sight of these marigolds must have filled the donkey's mind with some strange desires, for it stood gazing intently at those flowers. How it came to happen I do not know – it is not easy to fathom the mind of an

ass – but by degrees this jenny walked towards the marigolds, thinking perhaps to devour them. But lackaday! she was instantly swept up, bridle and britching, on one of those twirling sails. Oh, the cries of the donkey and the clashing of the cart still harnessed to it as the mill sail dashed them up and over and round again! What a to-do! What a hubbub! The miller rushed out and Mopsa followed to see what the uproar boded, and they were almost bereft of their senses.

'Murder! murder!' shrieked Mopsa. 'Please to stop the mill!'

The red sack of corn burst in the cart twirling up with the sail on high, and the yellow corn came pouring down on them like a sudden shower of hail. The miller ran back into the mill shouting, 'Stop the sails!' He stopped them at the wrong place, for when he went outside again the donkey and cart were hung aloft on the topmost sail, right against the sky. Poor jenny ass was clamouring in despair, and she kicked the yellow cart so perversely that next the blue bag burst and that corn, too, poured down on them like a fountain. There and then the little yellow cart broke out of the donkey's harness and fell crash from the top of the mill, but the donkey still hung weeping on the hook of the lofty sail. Mopsa was in a frenzy, holding out her arms to the sky and filling the air with heart-rending screams:



'The sails . . . swept down again, and this time the unhappy donkey caught its mistress such a blow in the vitals that she was dashed across a field and into a pond so deep that she was never seen or heard again.'

'Come down, my jenny! My pretty soul, come down!'

The poor, frantic miller released the sails once more, and they swept down again, and this time the unhappy donkey caught its mistress such a blow in the vitals that she was dashed across a field and into a pond so deep that she was never seen or heard again.

The miller once more came flying down his steps and freed the jenny, which was not much injured. Ungrateful ass! When it was once more firmly on its four feet, its first act was to kick Pedgell Cobbs in the midriff, and its second act was to dash off and away as if it had been stung by serpents. Like its mistress, the jenny ass was never seen or heard again.

There lay the little cart smashed at the foot of the mill, the blue sack and the red sack lying empty, the corn scattered and blown far and wide, and scores of birds pecking it up as fast as they could swallow. The miller stared at the corn and the devastation. It was almost more than mortal man could bear.

'My heart!' he groaned, 'this corn comes from freckled land.'

He looked around for Mopsa, but she was not there, and he never saw her again. He looked about for the young ass, but she was not there, and he never saw her again. He pulled the blue broken

wheels away, turned over the mangled cart, and pried among the damage.

'What have we here?' exclaimed the miller.

It was the black sack.

'I wonder what is in that black sack?'

He opened the sack. Ah, he wished he had never seen it and never opened it, for out slid the body of the old husband Mopso, whom Mopsa had cruelly beaten and killed!

'Dear, dear, dear, dear!' moaned poor Pedgell Cobbs.

But soon he remembered his father's last words, and he had such a tidy mind that he could only think of cleaning up all the mess and burying it. Quickly he dug a hole underneath the bush of marigolds, and buried old Mopso, so that he was never seen or heard of more. But from that year onwards those marigolds changed into onions, and the onions themselves were of inferior quality, although they made you weep tears of quite uncommon size.

CHAPTER X

HEDGEHOG MARKET

FAREWELL then to kind Fellafungobbelus. Away trudged Toby down the hill, and crossing the bridge of blue soapstone, he made his way into the middle of the town, where the market was. The market was filled with pens of hedgehogs and stalls of merchandise.

'Buy my fine quilly hogs, all quilly, the best in the market,' every dealer was crying. 'Fine quilly hogs, with snouts like apples and mad with fury. Fine quilly hogs – who'll buy?'

The little hogs had all spread their quills and fallen asleep. Close by, a crowd of people encircled a handsome woman, dressed in the black weeds of a widow. She leaned upon a staff, and perched on the top of the staff was a bony skull.

'Come, my darlings,' cried she, 'who wants a jolly epitaph? Leave no thought for to-morrow. An epitaph the last thing at night is a cordial for every morning. Time is too busy to do you justice, and love is too coy; use my wits and make your own history:

'The wrong thing said,
When we are dead,

Will last, and time
Beshame us;
But a delicate lie,
Before you die,
Will keep your name
Quite famous.'

'Listen, darlings all! Is any brave heart here suffering from the bite of a dog? Have a care! As this is my judge,' she cried in husky tones, smiting the top of the skull with the palm of her hand, 'I have something to fit his case. Or the insults of a flea? Judge me again; I have here my words of compassion. Or the attack of a lion? Well, it's dittoes to that, my hale and hearty one. Fair maidens here, do any of you propose to die of unrequited passion? I have a memorial here to soothe that case; epitaphs that weep, that sigh, that exalt, that mourn; thick ones, thin ones, *multum in parvo*. Darlings all, your kind attentions, please. Come here, child of the unknown!'

Reaching forth her jewelled fingers, the vendor of epitaphs seized the ear of Toby Tottel, and drew him into the open space beside her.

'You would like to have your epitaph free of cost to you, would you not?'

'If you please, ma'am,' replied Toby.

'Then you must assist me for a while.' She

unfolded a budget of broadsheets and began to recite:

'The cat stole a herring,
A baker saw the cat;
The baker told the beadle,
And the beadle saw to that.'

'Number one,' she cried, and pinned the broadsheet upon Toby's bosom for all to see:

'A weasel bit King Arthur;
But Arthur noticed her,
So he cut her into fourpenny bits
With bold Excalibur.'

'Number two. Of course, darlings all, I do not do this for a livelihood,' she cried, as she pinned the broadsheet on Toby's shoulder. 'I do it just to wear out my old clothes.'

'A flea attacked a mouse;
The mouse devoured the flea;
So she is passed beyond recall –
As far as I can see.'

'Number three.' This was pinned upon Toby's other shoulder. 'I haunt graveyards. Down with the lark! Up with the moon!'

'Weep, stranger, ere you pass;
The bones are here deposited
Of one who boldly faced a lion,
And basely died because he did.'

'Number four.' And she pinned it on Toby's back, and continued to pin epitaphs upon him until he was hidden.

But after she had sold all her epitaphs and the folk had gone away, she did not give Toby an epitaph; she gave him a lodestone.

'Put it in your pocket, and wish,' said she. 'But remember,' said she, 'to wish only for something you cannot think of, or your wish will be blighted. That lodestone is so strong that it will draw the shoe-nails out of a horse, and if you turn it upside down it might put them back again, but I cannot say for certain.'

Toby wandered away, clutching the lodestone very tightly in his pocket, and when he came to a quiet spot he wished:

'*Lodestone, born of rock and fire,*
Render me my true desire.'

And what he wished was to find the Book of Wisdom, *Open and Ask Me.*

He waited a long time, but no book appeared. He looked upwards, but no book fell out of the sky. But when he looked behind he saw a little shop which had a sign: '*Here lives a Bookseller.*'

Toby opened the door, and a whistle blew. There were rows upon rows of beautiful books, and on the counter stood a large bird, an owl, with a spy-glass under its wing.

'What do you want?' inquired the owl, without ruffling a feather.

'If you please,' Toby said, 'I want the Book of Wisdom.'

'I only keep books for birds,' the owl replied.

'Thank you, sir,' said Toby.

'Fool!' sneered the owl.

Toby walked quickly down the street with his hand on the lodestone, wishing hard. Soon there was another sign: '*Here lives a Bookseller.*'

Toby opened the door and a little trumpet sounded *Tara-tantivy-tara.* There were rows under rows of wonderful volumes, and behind the counter stood a fox with a wish-bone in its paws.

'What is your pleasure, sir?' inquired the fox, slightly waving its fine red tail. Toby told him what he was seeking.

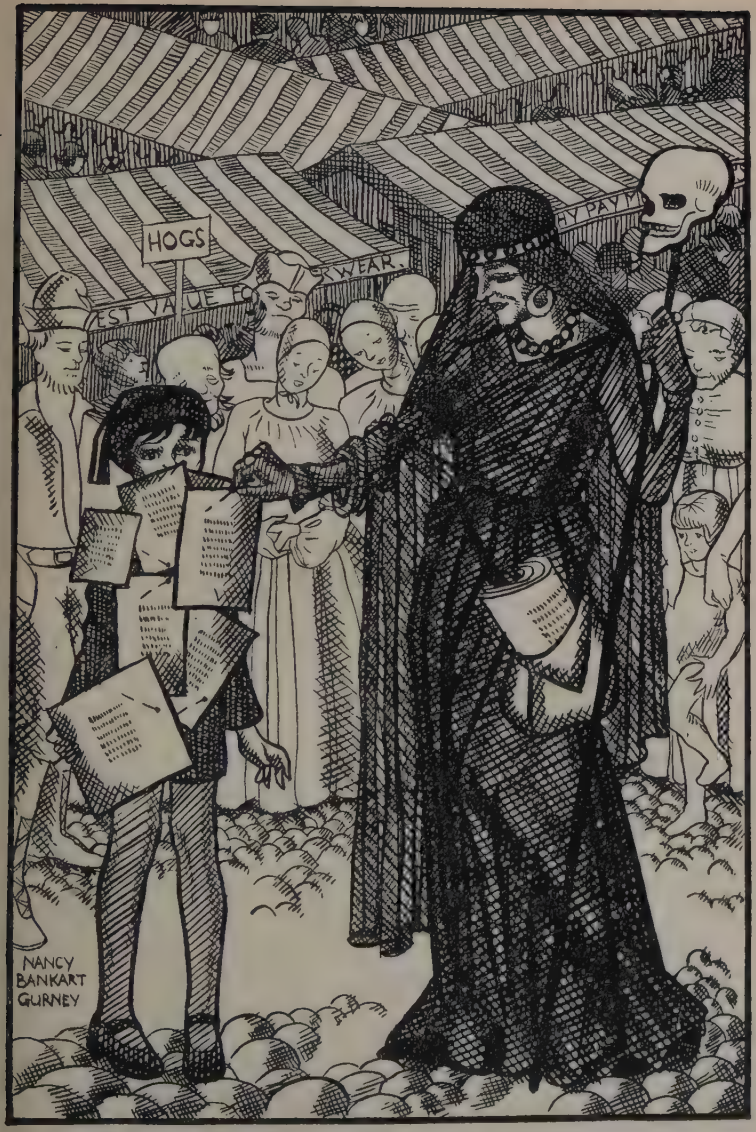
'I am afraid we are out of that line,' said the fox. 'I have the *Open and Close It, or the Bite that Failed.* I keep only books for animals.'

'Oh,' said Toby, 'I am sorry.'

'The trouble is mine,' said the fox, gnashing his teeth pleasantly.

Off went Toby, and again he wished, and again he saw a sign: '*Here lives a Bookseller.*'

He opened the door and a drum beat *Boom, boom, boom,* seven times. On the counter stood a crystal urn full of green water, where a salmon was disporting with a coral ring in its nose.



'She continued to pin epitaphs upon him until he was hidden.'

'What, please?' inquired the salmon, puffing a bubble.

Toby told him: '*The Book of Wisdom*.'

'Only keep fish books,' said the salmon. 'Sling your hook, please.'

Toby left the neighbourhood in despair, for there were no more bookshops, and he wandered out of the town and set off again into the wide world. But soon night overtook him and he sank down under a hollow tree and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XI

THE DREAM

IT is well known that it is not wise to sleep in a hollow tree; it is indeed as bad as to eat a dozen of cucumber and some crabs just before stealing to repose. Only the most beautiful persons, of the most noble natures, can bear to do this. Toby Tottel did not know, or he might have been more precautious; but if a person is so tired he is not so precautious as he might be if he was not so tired.

Even in his sleep Toby was dreaming of the *Open and Ask Me*, and he dreamed he had gone to seek the book in a country that was made entirely of cork. So bitterly cold it was in that country of cork that even his ears were as stiff as biscuits, and his breath as he breathed it came out of his mouth like a pillow and froze at once, froze at once into icicles and dropped on his foot; they kept on dropping on his foot. He longed to make a fire and warm himself, but he dared not make a fire because the country was made only of cork, nothing but cork, and if he had set light to it the whole world might have been consumed, and one or two innocent persons might have lost their lives before their time.

So then he was very thirsty, but he could find nothing to drink – no parsnip wine, no small beer or milk – and he picked up one of the icicles to lick it. But as soon as his tongue touched it, the icicle seized upon his tongue like a pair of pincers, and would not release its baleful clutch. Toby tugged and tugged so heartily that it gave him a cold sweat, and suddenly he pulled his tongue right out by the roots. He looked at it with tears in his eyes. It was like a piece of tomato, and he thought:

'Now I have pulled my tongue right out. I have spoiled my tongue. Now I shall never be able to find the Book of Wisdom. I am done for.'

Then he thought: 'But I shall put it back again.'

When he put his tongue back in his mouth again, the icicle soon melted away and he could speak very well once more, as clear as a bishop.

So then he was very hungry, but there was nothing to eat, no pumpkin pie, no lambs' tails, only pieces of cork. He broke a tiny piece off one of his ears that had grown like biscuits, and tried to nibble it. No sooner did he touch it with his teeth than all his teeth locked tight together, and he could not open his mouth.

'O lackaday me!' he thought. 'Now I have locked my jaw. I shall never be able to ask for Pink Furniture or *Open and Ask Me*. I am done for.'

Shivering with cold, he walked on, though of course his teeth could not chatter. He put his hands

in his pockets, and his cold fingers clutched the lodestone and found it was warm; but he was so full of sorrow that he was sure he would not care if this world made of cork came to an end most quickly. In this dream he seemed to be walking down a long dark tunnel, and there, at the far end of the tunnel, he saw a tiny round thing shining like a sixpenny piece. Toby walked towards it, nearer and nearer until it was as big as a shilling, and then nearer until it was as large as two.

'I am sure,' thought Toby, 'that is the end of a spyglass, and somebody is looking at me.'

Soon he got near the end of the tunnel, and in the light he could see the white owl sitting up in a cork tree, with the spyglass up to his eye, watching Toby's approach.

'What have you there in your hand, Toby Tottel?' asked the owl sternly.

Toby could not answer him.

'I think it is your ear,' the owl continued. 'Put it back where you found it!'

Toby put the piece of biscuit on his ear again, and as he did so, he sneezed backwards like a Chinaman, and his teeth at once flew apart, and his mouth became as loose and nice as it had always been.

'What do you want now?' inquired the owl, putting the spyglass under its wing.

'I want some Pink Furniture, if you please,' answered the boy.

'I am not a furniture dealer,' said the owl crossly.

'I remember you,' Toby politely said; 'you are a bookseller.'

'For birds,' added the cross old owl.

'I want the Book of Wisdom,' Toby continued.

'It is in the most unlikely place,' the owl said; 'it is in the island of Purganda.'

'Where is that?' the boy asked.

'On the other side of the world,' the owl informed him. 'I can fly you a part of the way, over the mountains. The fox will canter you a part of the way, over the valleys. The salmon will swim you part of the way, over the seas. You can fly, I suppose?'

'No,' said Toby.

'Oh, behemoth!' gulped the owl. 'How disgusting! Now I shall have to carry you. Come along, look alive! Hold my spyglass.'

The owl threw his spyglass at Toby, who caught it, and then he swooped down upon the boy, and firmly fixing his mighty claws in the shoulders of Toby's jacket, he lifted him clean off his feet into the air, and away they were gone, high up, silent and swift as a dart, leaving the world of cork behind them. It seemed to Toby that the sun shone warm and bright, that the sky was blue, but the world far below them was full of mountains, snowy rocks, and blue tarns that gleamed up at them like dragons'

eyes. If the owl should let him fall, he would be split into thousands of pieces, but he did not fear.

'By the bones of an ant,' said the owl, with a vexed cough, 'you people are the bane of my business!'

Toby assured him that he was most sorry to put him to this trouble, but he was bound to seek for wisdom.

'Fool!' the owl snorted, 'you are not seeking wisdom – you only want a book about it! Cast your eyes below and above and around, and tell me if we are being followed.'

Toby looked above and below and all round: 'I can see only a tiny black cloud a long way behind us.'

'Cloud!' screeched the owl. 'I'll wager my kidneys it is the Flying Klacken! Spy him, spy him through the glass!'

Toby swung round as well as he was able, and stared through the glass at the black cloud.

'Yes! It is like a black pig,' he cried out, 'only it has claws like a lion.'

'Yes!'

'And wings like a bat.'

'Yes!'

'A tail like a serpent.'

'Yes, yes!'

'And it is big as an ox.'

The white owl whirred its wings with great speed and swept like wind over the mountains.

'Keep your eye on him!' the owl commanded.

'Oh,' gasped Toby, 'now he's as big as a waggon of hay.'

'Keep your eye on him!' repeated the owl.

'Oh!' cried Toby, 'now he's as big as a barn!'

'Keep, keep your eye fixed fast on him.'

'Oh, he is bigger than any church now!' sobbed Toby.

Again the owl whirred his white wings, and in a twink they had come to the end of the mountains, and there was a green valley stretching below. The owl dropped like a meteor and flung Toby hurriedly down upon a bank, where sat the fox in calm sunshine with a wishbone in his paws.

'Have you a bridle?' cried the owl.

The fox leaped up and said 'No,' but Toby seized the wishbone and fastened it in the fox's mouth like a bit, jumped upon his back, and away they fled along that lovely vale towards a part of it that was still thickly covered with the mists of dawn. Behind them roared the great Klacken, and he was only a few spans behind when the fox galloped into the dense fog, and he and Toby were lost to view. For a moment the Klacken was baffled, but quickly it rose again into the air high up above the fog, and tore out handfuls of his teeth and threw them down into the misty valley. Directly the teeth touched the earth they

Portrait of the Flying Klacken.

sprang into life as foxhounds, and soon there were scores of hounds following the scent of the fox through the thick mists. On galloped the gallant fox, with Toby seated clinging to the wishbone. Away, away, and away over field, over fallow and pasture and stubble: up to a fence, whoop, over! Through hedge, copse, gap, path, yard; galloping, cantering, skimming, swerving, and tearing, out by a wall; whoop, over!

They could hear the fearful Klacken roaring high up above them, but as he could not see them they did not fear him. Their fear was of the Klacken's hounds, they were so fast and furious, and began to sound ever nearer. On galloped the fox with Toby, on past a nobleman's mansion, where a cook at the kitchen door threw her rolling-pin at them.

'How cruel people are!' murmured Toby.

On and on, over a wooden bridge where a hen was so flustered she cast herself into the stream and was sadly drowned.

'What a stupid hen!' cried Toby.

On and on and right through a flock of sheep they fled, and the sheep scurried madly in the mist and then fell upon each other and engaged in a mighty battle for hours.

'What a to-do!' sighed Toby.

Halloo! Halloo! The hounds were hard upon their traces. Toby heard them plunging through the brake, and the Klacken above could follow

them by their cries. The fox began casting troubled glances to the right and to the left. Now he was bounding bravely along by a field of ripe barley. There at the corner sat an old tinker by his fire, mending a kettle.

'Now for it!' cried fox, and in a flash he had dipped his tail in the tinker's fire-pot. At once his tail burst into flame, and thus he plunged right into the field of barley, and wherever he ran the beautiful barley caught fire too, and spread on every side.

'The fire will destroy our scent,' said the fox to Toby. 'And then you wait, just wait!'

Soon half the field of barley was perishing in flames, and the hounds plying hither and thither in the mist and smoke were lost in it; the smoke baffled them and the fire encircled them. But the fox ran straight through the corn and came to a pond where he stopped and dipped his tail, and thus quenched its flame. Then on and on he gaily sped with Toby on his back, but behind them the fire burnt a hole in the mist, so that the Klacken could see right down to earth; and the Klacken then cried 'Yoicks!' and plunged through the hole, plump into the burning barley, where he and all his hounds were burnt to cinders.

Away went fox in an easy canter, and in time he brought Toby to the shore of the blue sea. Toby dismounted and patted the fox kindly.

'Is there anything else you want me to do?' inquired the fox.

'Would you,' asked Toby, 'please give this spy-glass to the white owl? I forgot to return it to him.'

'I am not a postman,' replied the fox in proud tones. 'I am a bookseller.'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' Toby mumbled.

'The trouble is mine,' said the fox, gnashing his teeth pleasantly, and so departed.

Toby sat down upon a rock by the shore of the sea. The mists had gone, the great world was bathed in imperial brightness, and solitude, with its white rocks and blue waves and golden shore, was real and beautiful; but of course it was nothing but a dream, though Toby did not know it yet.

The rocks were white as snow, and black crabs as big as cats crawled over them, looking for something their children had lost, while long-legged crimson birds stood in the water and pretended they had nowhere to go. By and by a tiny pink sail appeared on the sea, and a little boat drew nigh. When it got close to the shore Toby saw that the boat was made of glass, the sail of shining silk, and a flaxen-haired girl was sitting in it, steering towards him.

'Ahoy, Toby!' cried the girl.

Toby answered: 'Ahoy, Bridget!' and climbed upon a rock in the sea, so that the boat could sail right up to him. Then he saw in the water a salmon

swimming with a coral ring in its mouth, and the coral ring was linked to a chain of gold, and the chain was tied to the nose of the boat, and thus the salmon drew the ship along.

The salmon stopped, and popping his head out of the water, shouted:

'If you please! Board ship, and prepare to sling hooks.'

So Toby stepped into the glass yawl, and Bridget hugged him and kissed him and said:

'Why did you not wrote me a letter?'

'How could I?' protested Toby.

'You promised,' Bridget replied.

'What about?'

'Oh, why are you so stupid!' was all her answer.

He began to despise her, but he sat down beside her while the salmon, with a splendid flirt of its tail, pulled the little glass yawl round and put out to sea once more. For some time Toby did not say anything to Bridget, but that was really because he could see through the glass yawl right down into the depths of the ocean and behold all the cities of that watery world. There were the castles made of sponge, there were the houses made of water, and all the inhabitants, most of them taking a bath, were pleasant, well-conducted fellows like shrimps, whales, mullets, dolphins, cockle and scallop and cod, a kind and thoughtful race. Every Friday – so the salmon said – the children of the

sea wriggled their way into the temples to deplore the weakness of human nature and pray for its redemption.

Then Bridget spoke to Toby.

'When are you coming home, Toby?'

He said: 'When I have found Pink Furniture. Then I shall come and marry you.'

'You have been away a long time,' Bridget said.

'Only a day or two,' he cried.

'Oh no,' said Bridget; 'it is a year or two.'

How silly! It made him so cross. And yet he could not help feeling that he had been going round and round the world for ages.

'The common is as nice as ever,' Bridget told him, 'only it was better when you lived there. Mr. Adhemar got married, and your aunt washes more washing than ever. Oh dear me, your garden is always full of washing. I hate it. It is only low people who take in washing.'

Toby now began to despise her with a deep loathing, and so angry was he that he seized her by her flaxen hair and flung her into the ocean, and down she sank into the arms of an octopus. Of course that would have been a rather unkind thing to do, but you must remember it was only done in a dream.

The salmon poked his nose up out of the sea and blew a bubble into the air, and the bubble grew and grew until it became a balloon as large

as a house. Up into the sky it softly floated, like a giant pearl, and then a red rope slid down from the balloon, with a basket on the end. The basket sank into the water for a moment or two, and then the balloon rose up and the basket rose out of the water, and in the basket sat Bridget. Away went the balloon towards the land, and Toby could hear her calling to him over the sea as they drifted far apart.

'Good-bye, Toby dear. Come back soon.'

The boy was so glad. Tears rolled out of his eyes, and as long as daylight lasted, he stared at the dwindling balloon that bore Bridget away, and waved his pocket-handkerchief.

There was a glass locker on the boat, and he could see it was full of barley bannocks and nutmegs and locust beans, so he ate a hearty meal, and as soon as it got quite dark he lay down in the boat to rest. Silently the little glass yawl moved onwards over the sea. In the sky above them, a new moon sailed like another glass ship, and glistened on the mast, the tiller, and the bows of the yawl. As Toby lay resting, he suddenly saw a figure sitting on the side of the yawl with its legs dangling in the sea, a white faint form, like a sailor, but so transparent that Toby knew it to be a phantom.

'Ahoy, mate!' whispered the sailor.

'Ahoy!' replied Toby.

'Whither bound, mate?' The sailor's voice was faint as a sigh.

'Purganda,' Toby replied.

'Belay there! A rum hole that, my hearty,' the sailor said, with a smile. 'Haul tackle, and down with your anchor.'

But Toby told him firmly that he was going on and nothing should stop him.

'Go to it then, mate,' said the sailor. 'That Purganda is full of lunatics and books and pretty trousers. You haven't got a night-light on you, have you?'

'No,' answered Toby; 'but I can give you a nutmeg.'

The sailor shook his head.

'Or a barley bannock?'

Again the sailor shook his head.

'Or a locust bean?'

'I'd like a piece of pie,' the sailor said. 'That was the thing I was after when I went down, long ago, the last thing, years and years ago.'

His voice grew more and more husky, and he himself grew sad with old memories. For a long while he spoke no more. Then in thin, husky tones he sang this song:

'Born on a Friday,
Perished at sea;
Friday was my day,
Pity me!

'Away went the balloon towards the land.'

I set sail for Dover
To ship some apple pies;
Nothing more was heard of me:
Pipe your little eyes!

A cobbler in the offing
Was shoeing of a cow;
I nearly died of laughing,
But I don't laugh now.

Born on a Friday,
Perished at sea;
Friday was my day,
Pity me!'

As the phantom ended his lament, he let himself slide slowly down into the sea again. His white, misty hands clung for a moment to the rim of the glass yawl, then he was gone. As soon as he was all gone Toby fell fast asleep – and that is the end of his dream.

CHAPTER XII

THE ISLAND OF PURGANDA

WHEN Toby awoke, the sun was shining; it was broad day, and he was lying upon a beach with the sea curling over in little waves below him. He sat up and looked around, but he could not recognize anything. Where was the hollow tree he had slept in all night? It was not to be seen anywhere. How did he come to be lying on this beach, and where did this sea come from?

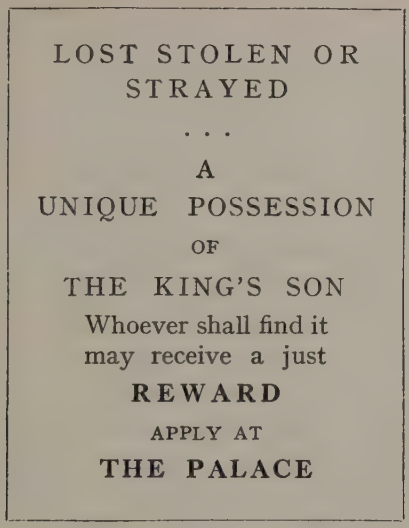
'Lackabody me, what has happened?' he wondered. Then he began to remember some of the things he had been dreaming of: the white owl and the Klacken, the ride on the fox, the fire in the barley, the glass yawl, and dear Bridget. All, all of it came back to him. Round and about he looked, but the salmon had departed, there was no glass yawl in sight, and not a sail upon the sea, pink or white, or any sort at all. In his pocket he found only the lodestone, a nutmeg, the pocket-handkerchief his aunt had given him, and the penny farthing. The spyglass was gone, the

yawl, the fox, the owl – all were gone, and he could only conclude that he had dreamt about those things, and about the journey, and yet even while he dreamed of them, they really had happened.

Now here he was on the other side of the world! That was wonderful, but what was he going to do now? To be alone in a place so full of strange things made him tremble, and although he only wanted Pink Furniture and the *Open and Ask Me*, there was danger wherever he turned, and they were as far off as ever.

'*In what chamber do you lie,*
Pink and precious mystery?
Where may I your page behold,
Tome of Wisdom, book of gold?
I must wander, I am fain
Of the glories you contain,
Seeking where the spell confines you:
Tell me what fair house enshrines you,
Mansion, cottage, court, or villa,
Pink Charybdis, pleasant Scylla?'

Toby decided to travel inland from the sea, so he left the beach and walked from the shore until he came upon a road; and along that road he came to a barn, and on the barn door was posted a large notice;



Soon Toby met a man coming towards him, and Toby determined to ask him the way to the palace. The man was dressed in lovely clothes; he had on trousers of yellow velvet, a blue silk coat, and a hat with a green band. As the man walked he was reading intently in a book.

'Excuse me,' began Toby; but the man passed him by and took no heed of him.

By and by another man approached, and he too was reading in a book. He had green velvet trousers and a pink satin jacket.

'Excuse me,' began Toby again; but again this man passed him by, reading his book, and took no heed of him.

Dozens of richly attired men passed him by, and all were reading intently in their books as they walked along, and not one would answer him or pay him the least attention. Then he met a woman, dressed all in hodden grey, and she too read in a book and would not notice him.

'Lackabody me!' sighed Toby, 'what is to do now? Everybody is reading, and no one will answer me.'

But presently, to his great joy, he met two children, a boy and a girl, and they were not reading. The boy was dressed in rich clothing like the men, but the little girl was in hodden grey.

'Pray tell me,' said Toby to them, 'where the king's palace is.'

So they told him, and Toby went to the king's palace.

It was a palace made of some white stone. At the palace gates stood a soldier in lovely uniform. In his belt he had a large pistol, in one hand a sword, and in the other he had a book held up to his nose. And he read so eagerly that Toby was afraid to disturb him, so he walked past the soldier and on up to the palace porch, where he struck the knocker rather quietly. He waited some time in the porch, and while he waited he smelt a sweet smell; but he could not find the cause of that until he leaned against the white wall of the palace, and then he felt sure the walls were made of peppermint cream.

So he put out the tip of his tongue, and the walls *were* made of peppermint cream. At that moment the door opened and a janitor stood there, with one hand holding the knob of the door, the other hand holding a book to his nose. He was reading away like one mad. Without a word or a look he signed to Toby to enter. Toby followed the janitor, still reading, and they went up a large winding staircase. Several times they met butlers, all of them reading as they went, and once the janitor collided with the man who cleans the palace inkstands. Down they fell to the floor, both of them, but they lay there and read for a little while, and then got up and passed on without a word. At last Toby and the janitor came to a small door with the king's motto engraved upon it in sealing-wax. The janitor opened the door and Toby entered. Just inside the room stood a low pedestal with chains. The janitor motioned Toby to stand on the pedestal while he fastened the chains around Toby's ankles. Then, after having hung a placard round the boy's neck –

UNKNOWN PERSON
TO SEE THE KING

the janitor went reading away.

It was a large square room with windows and a

table. The walls were covered with New Masters composed in batik and framed in linoleum; the rest of the furniture was scarlet, and all the shovels were of gold. At the table sat a man of regal aspect, poring over a book. For twenty minutes the king took no notice of Toby, who stood motionless. Then, without looking up from his book, the king spoke:

'Have you found it?'

'No, your majesty,' replied Toby. 'I have come to . . .'

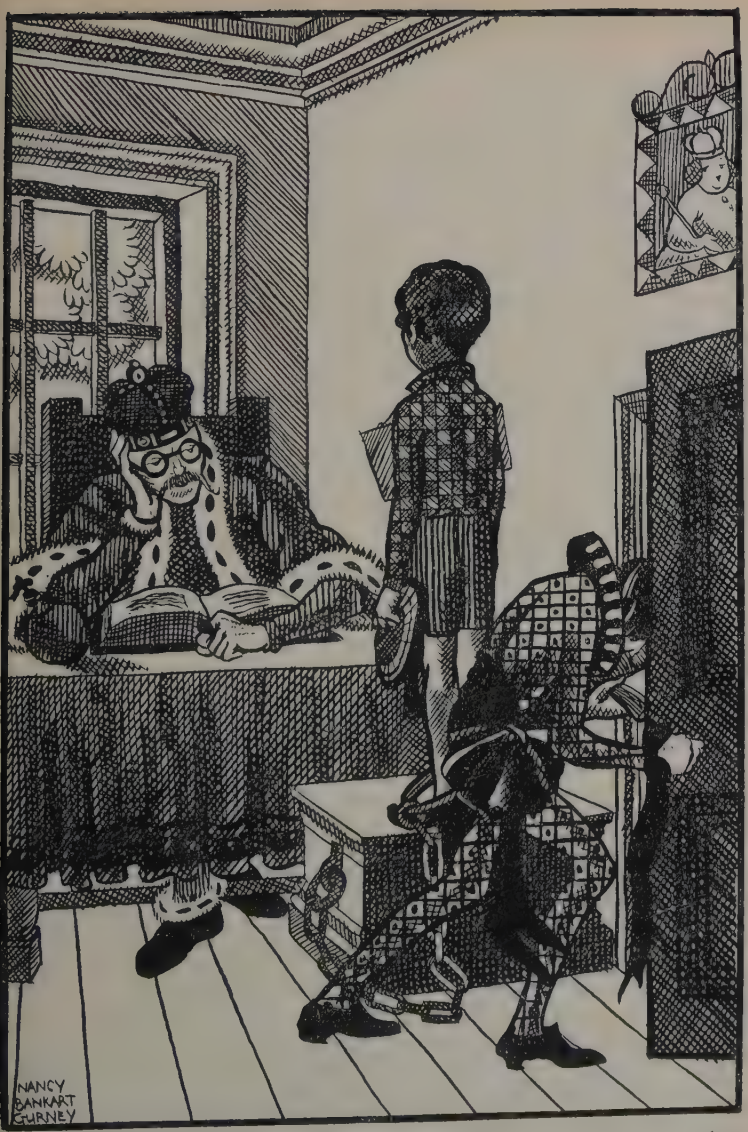
'Hush!' interrupted the king, and he went on reading for another twenty minutes.

Then the king again began to murmur, without raising his eyes from his book:

'You have come about the Public Notice. It is quite uncalled-for and needlessly delightful. I am bound to say I did not hope for such an enthusiastic response. My son the prince has lost something of the greatest importance and value. Having prized it beyond life itself, he is now prostrate with grief; my palace is mute with sorrow, the whole nation mourns this loss. Find it. Find it, and relieve my tortured realm from this calamity.'

The king ceased, and silence reigned in the stricken room for another twenty minutes, while the king became absorbed in his book. Then he spoke once more, without raising his eyes:

'Have you found it?'



'The janitor . . . fastened the chains around Toby's ankle . . . then went reading away.'

'No, your majesty,' replied Toby. 'What is it he has lost?'

'The heir to my throne,' murmured the solemn king, still poring over his book, 'has lost his favourite blood-alley. It was a unique marble. It must and should be found, the finder shall or should be rewarded, and the thief must or might be slain. Go! I cannot bear it any longer.'

The door plunged open and the janitor, finger and nose in book, released the boy from his chains, and Toby then followed downstairs, and along many corridors until they went through a doorway, and came out on a lovely lawn. Here the janitor hung another placard around Toby's neck:

UNKNOWN PERSON
COME TO FIND BLOOD-ALLEY

Then the janitor went reading away.

There were seven golden stools on the lovely lawn, and on each stool a child sat reading. Four of them were boys, and three of them were girls. Not one looked up or spoke a single word. A giant cedar tree spread out its ancient branches like an umbrella on the lawn, and seven pairs of small goloshes were ranged upon a doorstep. Toby stood stock-still for a long time. Which was the prince?

'There were seven golden stools on the lovely lawn, and on each stool a child sat reading.'

It must be that nice boy with the green silk trousers and the tunic of gold. He did not look so very unhappy. The girls were all clad in hodden grey, and the oldest one had flaxen hair like Bridget; it spread all out from her head like the down on a gosling, and Toby observed that as she read she wept copiously. Now, although it was very rude of him, he could not forbear going on tiptoe to peer over her shoulder and see what she was reading in that sorrowful book. It was a poem, strange and ultra-modern:

LOVE IS A PANTHER'S FOOT
AND NONE MAY SEE IT'S CLAWS
IT WEARS NON SHOE NON BOOT
BUT NO ONE SCARCE SUSPECTS
LOVE IS A PANTHER'S FOOT

Purgandian poetry is hard to read at first - in fact, it is quite unpleasant; but poetry is much the same wherever you go and wherever it comes from, so it cannot be helped. Foreign languages are also hard at first, but you either get used to them or you despise them. This is a sample of the Purgandian language, to prove that it is a real place and not made up by me out of some other book. But I will translate all the poetry in future.

It took Toby some time to master that poem, but

when he did master it he was dismayed at having carelessly intruded upon the young princess's grief, and he stole quietly away to a corner of the great lawn, where he saw a noble building built of much material. Over the doorway was carved in sealing wax:

PUBLIC MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

(*Not to be taken away*)

Toby entered. All the exhibits were tidily arranged in cabinets of pure gold and glass, and each cabinet had a bone label with the explanations written on it. So very rich and sumptuous. Toby had seen nothing like it before, nothing, nothing. He strolled around, peeping here and peeping there. The first cabinet contained

FRAGMENT OF STEAM ENGINE (*minus steam*)

Another section displayed

PORTION OF FIRST CHOCOLATE; *partly sucked by Infant Prince*
,, ,, CARAMEL *ditto* (*much reduced from life size*)
,, ,, COUGH LOZENGE *ditto* (*imperfect state*)

For a long time Toby hung over these objects, they were so lifelike, but at last he moved on to a third cabinet;

MODEL OF UNKNOWN BIRD: *without head or feet or wings*
(*Designed for the Institute of Penwipers*)

That was almost lifelike, and close by he saw

ANCIENT PURGANDIAN HORSESHOE NAIL: *Made of Metal: found by a clergyman in a coal-mine* 95 *miles N.W. of the P. & O.*
(*Purchased by Public Subscription*)

There it was, the very nail. Toby could almost touch it. Not far off came

PIECE OF PETRIFIED SAUER KRAUT: *washed up on shore in the year of the Great Famine*
(*Purchased by the Pantry Request Fund*)

But what attracted him most of all was a large picture on the wall, entitled *The Pink Chair*, painted by the Master who designed those stripes on postmen's trousers. Truly beautiful, and rather like a chair; quite certainly a chair – but pink!

How pleasantly time passes when we are looking at things that have been preserved from age to age! They are – as Mr. Adhemar would say – the strokes of a vanished hand. If he ever lived to be five thousand years old, Toby knew he would always recall this moment when he had first seen the horseshoe nail, the cough drop, and the pink chair. In fact his soul was just being filled with music, but at that moment he caught sight in a mirror of the placard hung round his neck:

UNKNOWN PERSON
COME TO FIND BLOOD-ALLEY

and he remembered his duty.

Into the garden he crept again on tiptoe, but all the children were still silently and sombrely reading, so, when he had got as far as the prince, he peered over the prince's shoulder to see what the prince was reading. The page was headed

APPLIED ARITHMETIC

'The grey-lag goose has two feet,
The buffalo twice as many,
A yard has only three feet,
A footbath has not any:
If two forefeet make eight feet,
And two behind two more,
Why are there never eight feet
Behind the two before?'

Toby heard the prince murmuring to himself: 'Oh, is it not too beautiful!'

Toby coughed. The prince swung round on his golden stool and read the words on Toby's placard.

'Well,' said the prince, 'have you found it?'

He was the first person who had conversed with Toby Tottel in that Island of Purganda, and the other children at once shut up their books and crowded round him.

'No,' said Toby; 'but I will.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLOOD-ALLEY

'PRAY be seated,' said Toby to the other children. They obeyed, arranging themselves in a half-circle, while Toby sat down on the grass like a tailor, facing them.

'Now tell me,' he said to the prince, 'all about your loss as clearly as you can.'

'Well, you see,' said the prince, 'I have lost my blood-alley and I cannot find it.'

Said Toby: 'Describe it to me.'

'It is of pure crystal,' the prince said, 'as large as a starling's egg.'

It appeared that on the afternoon of the day before the prince was playing games of marbles in the courtyard behind the palace with Soapy Barnacle, the son of the prime minister, and the prince had lost so heavily that, having nothing else left, he staked his beloved blood-alley, and put it in the ring. Just when they were about contending for this most precious toy, they were called to have tea, and as Purgandian customs permit of no laxity, they left the marble in its critical position, and went into the palace for tea, with intent to finish the game at a later time. Before the prince returned

the blood-alley had vanished, and although the palace had been ransacked from top to bottom, no trace of it could be found.

'Please take me to the courtyard,' said Toby. Every child jumped up.

'No,' said Toby, 'if you please. I want only the prince to go with me.'

So the six children sat down again, and went on with their reading, while the prince took Toby through the gardens until they came to the back of the palace. The courtyard was square, with three blank walls partly enclosing it. The fourth side of the courtyard was open to the garden. Two of the walls were formed by the back of the royal stables, and the other was formed by the side of the royal kitchen. The courtyard had a yellow, sandy ground, smooth and tidy except for footprints, and against the kitchen wall was a pump and a dust-bin.

'Tell me,' said Toby, 'did anybody watch you at play here yesterday?'

'No one,' the prince answered. He then showed Toby the ring made in the centre of the yard where he and Soapy Barnacle had played marbles. There was the ring, still quite plain. It had been marked out by a sharp-pointed stick that still lay near by. Toby picked up the stick and examined it very thoughtfully before putting it in his pocket.

'Who called you to go in to tea yesterday?'

'The cook,' answered the prince.

'What sort of person is this cook?'

'A very honest woman,' was the prince's reply. 'She has been our cook for forty years.'

'Does she by any chance play marbles?'

'I have never seen her at play,' the prince said.

'Now, when she called you in to tea yesterday, did you go at once?'

The prince thought a moment and then answered:

'No; not quite at once, but soon.'

'Why did you not go at once?'

'Well, you see,' said the prince, flushing a little, 'there was a man delivering ginger-beer at the kitchen door.'

'Where is the kitchen door?' Toby interrupted sharply.

'Just round that corner, past the dust-bin.'

'Go on,' said Toby.

'You see,' stammered the prince, 'it was a new kind of ginger-beer; we had never had any of that kind before.'

'What kind?' said Toby, interrupting again.

'Quinsey's Phenomenal,' the prince said. 'And very good it is.'

'How do you know that?'

'Well,' the prince explained, a little guiltily, 'Soapy and I waited until the van had delivered the ginger-beer, and when they had gone I went into the kitchen and commanded cook to open a bottle of it for us to taste.'

'Yes, yes,' cried Toby hastily. 'Was Soapy Barnacle with you then?'

'No,' the prince admitted.

'Where was he?'

'He stayed round the corner here in the courtyard until I brought him some of it in a glass. Oh, it is most excellent ginger-beer.'

'Then what did you do?'

'Then,' the prince continued, 'we went into the palace together and had tea. But I know the blood-alley was still in the ring when we left. I know it was there, because I looked and saw it there. And I waited until Soapy was out of the court-yard.'

'Why did you do that?' demanded Toby.

'Because,' said the prince slowly, 'I wanted to be sure it *was* there.'

'Did you not trust Soapy Barnacle?' Toby smoothly inquired.

And the prince answered: 'Yes, oh yes, I did, but I wanted to see it.'

'And then,' Toby continued, 'you both went and had tea, and when you came down again the blood-alley had vanished?'

'No,' the prince explained; 'that is not what happened. My papa wanted me while we were having tea, so I had to go to his chamber, and then he told me I was not to go to the courtyard any more that afternoon.

'Was Soapy Barnacle with you when you went to your papa?'

The prince said: 'No. I had to leave him in my room.'

'Alone?' asked Toby.

And the prince answered: 'Yes, alone.'

'How long were you absent from Soapy?'

'About twenty minutes,' said the prince.

'What was Soapy doing all that time?'

'Having his tea. You know,' the prince went on, 'he ate all the crumpets – he is rather greedy.'

'And then?'

'Then, when papa forbade me to play any more in the courtyard, I told Soapy and he went home. I showed him out of the palace, and he went home.'

'Which way did he leave the palace?'

'Oh,' the prince said, 'I showed him out of the front door of the palace, and he went home.'

'Could he, by any means,' Toby asked the prince, 'get into the courtyard after leaving the palace?'

'Oh no, it is impossible,' the prince sighed.

'Have you seen him since?' Toby inquired.

'No,' the prince answered, 'I have not seen him since; he has not been here.'

'Good,' cried Toby. 'That will do for the present, thank you. Now run away and play, and leave me to find out everything. I shall want a magnifying-glass. Will you please send one out to me? And, by the bye, please let the cook bring it.'

'Oh, do find my blood-alley!' moaned the little prince, beginning to cry.

'Sure!' answered Toby, in a soothing manner. 'I will find your blood-alley.'

'Will you find it soon, please?'

'Quite soon, quite soon. In fact,' Toby promised, 'we will play a match with it this afternoon.'

The dear little prince soon dried his eyes and went away.

'Don't forget to send me out that magnifying-glass,' Toby called after him.

In a few moments a fat dame waddled to the corner, and to Toby's disgust she was solemnly reading a book in paper covers with glaring pictures. Silently she held out a large magnifying-glass to Toby, who was noting very keenly that she wore spring-side boots and turned out her toes in a peculiar way.

'Excuse me,' Toby called out, 'but please do not walk about in the courtyard. I will come to you.'

The cook thereupon ceased to read, put her finger between the pages of the book, and stood waiting.

'Madam,' began Toby, after taking the magnifying-glass out of her hand and staring at her feet through it, 'would you care to play me a game of marbles?'

The cook replied No, she would rather not.

'Then,' said Toby, 'show me the kitchen door, please.'

The cook led him out of the courtyard, and there, just round the corner, was a little blue door and two large windows. Toby just glanced around, and at once went back to the yard, followed by the cook.

'Can anybody,' said Toby, 'get into this yard without being seen by you?'

'Well,' said the cook, putting one hand on her hip, 'they might, but I should nearly always see them.'

'Has anybody been into the yard since tea-time yesterday?'

'No, sir,' the cook declared.

'Are you quite sure? Please think again.'

'Oh!' cried cook, 'yes, there was somebody. The dustmen called at tea-time yesterday to empty the dust-bin.'

'Oh,' drawled Toby. 'Dustmen?'

'But I watched them, sir. I always watch dustmen. You have to. I stood here on this very spot while they took the bin away, and I waited until they brought it back again.'

'Good,' said Toby; 'you may go.'

Cook dropped him a curtsey, opened her book again, and went back to the kitchen.

Toby then at once began a most careful inspection of the courtyard, beginning with the ring where the blood-alley had last been seen. He was rewarded

'Taking the magnifying-glass out of her hand and staring at her feet through it.'

by finding there a small fragment of something he could not at first identify. As it lay in the palm of his hand he examined it through the magnifying-glass, and then he saw that it was a crumb of toasted crumpet.

'Ho, ho!' murmured Toby.

Bending down close to the sandy soil again with his magnifying-glass, he discovered three tiny indentations made in the soil by some sharp instrument, each about an inch apart, in a straight line, thus:

. . .

'Burn my body!' Toby murmured, 'this is important.'

Then he went over to the pump, but all he discovered there were some tiny fragments of broken glass, lying on the ground beside it. Last of all he went to the dust-bin. The dust-bin stood close to a little drain where refuse water from the kitchen came through a pipe in the wall. A few inches from the drain lay a small heap of white ash and flakes, something like bits of eggshell, but quite flat and easy to break. He picked up a portion and smelt it. It had no smell. He bit another piece, and it crumpled in his mouth. It had no taste. Also, close to the drain he saw a round black mark as big as a dish. With his magnifying-glass he found that the blackness was composed of soot.

'Yes, yes,' he muttered; 'but why?'

After a long meditation Toby got up from his

knees and leaned against the dust-bin, thinking very thoughtfully. You see, he was hot on the trail of the prince's blood-alley already, and as any fool can see, all the clues pointed in one direction.

Suddenly he snatched off the lid of the dust-bin, but he was so astonished at what he saw inside, that he dropped the lid on the ground with a terrible clatter.

'Phew!' he cried.

The dust-bin should, by all accounts, have been empty, but it was only almost empty. There, at the bottom of the dust-bin, lay – what do you think? – pieces of a broken ginger-beer bottle.

'Of course, of course!' he cried. 'It is perfectly plain! Now I am sure.'

The bottle was broken in several pieces, and he picked them all out of the bin. Toby rushed over to the pump again, and picked up the fragments of glass he had previously seen there. Yes, they were the same glass as the ginger-beer bottle; and the bottle, he could now see, had been smashed deliberately on the angle of the iron pump – he could see the marks on the pump still.

'Good, good!' he muttered to himself again. Then for a long time he searched all over the courtyard. There was something missing from that broken bottle, and he wanted to find it. He knew that all such bottles have a small glass marble in them, instead of a cork, and he wanted to find it, that little glass marble. It was important. But no

matter how carefully he looked he could not find it anywhere, and he began to groan with despair. Back he went to the tiny heap of white flakes beside the drain, and he crumbled some with his fingers.

'Yes, yes; but where is the marble from the broken ginger-beer bottle?'

The bin stood empty now, but he bent over and stared until he became giddy.

'If I cannot find it in the courtyard, and if it is not in the bin, where else can it be?'

Suddenly he cried out: 'Oh, you fool, Toby Tottel, it must be *under* the bin!'

He bundled the bin on one side, and there, sure enough, lay the glass marble from the ginger-beer bottle. Toby flung all the glass pieces back into the bin and closed the lid. Then away he went to see the cook in her kitchen. There she was, buried alive, you might say, in a book, and she did not hear a word he spoke to her until he had banged a pothook most furiously on the kitchen dresser. Then she looked up and said 'Hallo!'

'Cook,' said Toby, 'please show me to the cellar.'

Off to the cellar they went, and there he saw some rows and rows of bottles of ginger-beer. Each bottle had stuck on it a bright yellow label, with the words *Quinsey's Phenomenal* printed in red.

'Oh!' Toby gnashed his teeth privately, and groaned to himself. 'There was no label on that broken bottle! Where has that label gone?'

But aloud he inquired of the cook: 'Where is the empty ginger-beer bottle, the one you supplied the prince from yesterday when he was going to tea?'

'Well, to be sure,' ejaculated cook, 'it should be here, but it is not here!'

'Have you broken it?' he asked smoothly.

'Broken it?' cried the cook. 'No fear, not likely. It is somewhere about, it is the only one empty, but where it is I cannot just say at this moment.'

'Yesterday afternoon, cook, you toasted some crumpets for tea.'

'Yes,' the cook agreed; 'leastways, I did not toast them, but Mogo did.'

'Who is Mogo?'

'She's the scullion,' replied cook. 'Or she was. A little blackamoor; but she has been so careless and so cheeky of late that I discharged her on the spot last night. I discharged her, the blackamoor.'

'Oh, thank you, cook,' cried Toby enthusiastically, giving the cook a hug and a kiss. 'Now everything is all right, it is clear as clear, is it not?'

'Certainly,' said the cook. 'Will you dine with me?'

'I shall be very glad to dine,' Toby said.

'And so shall I,' cook cried.

Down they both sat at once, and Toby had beans and barley water until he nearly burst, and was very happy and contented, except that he kept on thinking:

'I wish I knew what became of the label off that broken ginger-beer bottle. I wish I knew. But still, I do not know.'

After this dinner Toby went and examined with his magnifying-glass many of the footprints in the courtyard.

'Yes,' he murmured, 'yes. But too late.'

Then he left the courtyard and went away to the lawn again, and there was the prince with his three brothers and his three sisters.

'Have you found it?' they all cried.

'Well,' Toby calmly smiled, 'I think I know where it is. Please to send at once for Soapy Barnacle.'

The janitor was sent to fetch the prime minister's son, and while he is gone I must tell you the names of everybody.

The prince's name is never mentioned at any time in the Annals of Purganda, he is referred to always as prince; but he has three brothers, one of whom, a bright child, is known as Pipkin; the others are named Tattle and Battle. Of the three sisters, the eldest one, who has the hair like a gosling, is called Priceless, while the other two are known as Purge and Purgatory, and that, I think, is solely to remind you of the name of their nation, as they do not seem to be good for anything else.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REVELATION

THE news of the discovery of the prince's blood-alley spread like wildfire through the palace. All flocked to the lawn, and it was instantly crowded with courtiers, richly attired men and dowdy women, who stood about ceaselessly reading in their books. Even when the crowned king himself came along, they took no more notice of him than he took of them, for he was busy in the seventy-ninth volume of the memoirs of a forgotten fishmonger.

Toby was in the middle of the lawn, standing in a circle formed by the princesses and princes on their golden stools. Soon a commotion was seen, and when a lane was made through the press of courtiers Soapy Barnacle came into the circle, reading desperately hard in a book he carried close up to his nose. Soapy was a pale, fattish child, with rough, rank hair, and he was so wrapt up in that book that he ignored the several questions Toby at once put to him. Therefore Toby stepped up and quietly removed the book from the boy's hands. Immediately Soapy snarled in protest: 'My place! My place!'

'All right,' said Toby quietly; 'I will turn down the corner of the page for you.'

Oh, what a howl of passion gushed from every throat in that royal assembly! In amazement the innocent Toby cowered before the throng of outraged courtiers before he realized that to do such a thing to a book in Purganda was indeed vile – in fact, it was demoniacal.

'Very well,' he said to Soapy, smiling at last; 'put your book-mark in the place.'

Soapy took the book, opened it, and extracted a piece of coloured paper. After inserting this at the page he was reading, he handed the book back to Toby, who at once opened the book again and stared at the book-mark. It was yellow, and on it, printed in red, were the words *Quinsey's Phenomenal*. It was the label missing from the broken ginger-beer bottle!

Every step in this amazing affair was now clear to Toby; his case was complete. Turning all round to view the multitude, Toby cried out:

'I wish every one to sit down, as my explanation of this matter may take some little time. Will every one please sit down; thank you.'

All, from the king in his golden crown to the least of his courtiers, sat down on the grass like tailors, and to Toby's great relief they all shut up their books and prepared to give him their whole attention. Toby alone remained standing, and thus he began:

'My first step in solving this mystery was to observe that the prince wears pointed shoes. My last step was to observe that Soapy Barnacle wears flat sandals. The courtyard where the blood-alley was last seen is covered with faint footprints of both of them. I may say at once that the footmarks of the prince are of no importance in this affair.'

Toby now confronted Soapy Barnacle and said:

'Yesterday afternoon you played marbles with the prince in yonder courtyard. At the close you were engaged in a struggle for the capture of the prince's peerless blood-alley. At a critical point you left off playing and went into the palace for tea, leaving the blood-alley lying exposed in the ring. That is quite clear; it *was* left lying in the ring?'

Soapy Barnacle nodded his head.

'Quite so,' said Toby. 'While you were at tea the prince had to leave you alone for some twenty minutes while he attended the king. Now tell me, Soapy Barnacle,' continued Toby, solemnly shaking his lifted finger at that boy, 'why did you then and there rush secretly down to the courtyard again?'

Young Barnacle flushed, and stuttered that he did not, he most certainly did not, he did nothing of the kind.

'Be careful,' Toby admonished him, 'and tell me why you returned secretly to the courtyard when the prince was called to his papa?'

Again Soapy sulkily denied doing so, whereupon

Toby opened Soapy's book, took out the label used as a book-marker, and held it up.

'Then please tell me where you got this label. It is from a ginger-beer bottle.'

When they heard that, two of the most modern poets in the audience swooned away.

'I found it,' said Soapy.

'You found it! When did you find it?'

'Yesterday, I think.'

'Yesterday for certain, Soapy Barnacle; and where did you find it?'

'I . . . I don't remember.'

'Then I will tell you,' Soapy said smoothly. 'You found it in the courtyard, close to the pump.'

'Yes,' admitted Soapy; 'I think that is where I found it.'

'Thank you,' said Toby. 'Now I am going to ask you once more: why did you rush secretly down to the courtyard when you were left alone in the prince's room?'

'I tell you I did nothing of the kind,' shouted Soapy. 'You seem to think I ran down to steal the blood-alley, but you are wrong. I did not, and I did not steal it. My conscience is quite clear.'

'A clear conscience is all very well,' Toby said patiently, 'but an alibi is much better. That very label was on a ginger-beer bottle in the royal kitchen when you went to tea. Did you go into the kitchen?'

'No,' said Soapy sourly; 'I did not, you see!'

'But you have got the label here now.' Toby pointed it out. 'So when did you get it?'

Soapy hung his head, and the silence of the multitude was so profound that you could have heard a pin drop if it had not been for the grass.

'Come,' continued Toby, 'tell me why you ran back secretly to the courtyard.'

'I did not steal the blood-alley,' bellowed Soapy, bursting into a rage of tears. 'I did not steal it; I tell you I did not.'

Suddenly he jumped up and ran off. Many hands stretched out to catch the rascal, but Toby cried:

'It is all right; let him go; he did not steal the blood-alley!'

All stared in silent stupefaction at Toby Tottel.

'But I want my blood-alley,' the little prince began to whimper; 'I want it.'

'Yes, yes,' said Toby soothingly; 'it is just coming. Please to send for the cook.'

So the janitor went off to fetch the cook, and when the cook came she threw her apron over her head and howled like a cat:

'I did not steal the blood-alley. It was that vile little blackamoor. I told you so!'

'No, no,' Toby said. 'She has not got it. Cook, it is in your possession!'

The cook threw down her apron again, put her hands upon her hips, and called Toby a lying young blackguard.

Toby laughed merrily, and holding up his right hand said:

'Cook, listen!'

So the cook sat down and listened.

'Answer me, please, cook. After the prince and Soapy Barnacle had gone into the palace to tea, was there an empty ginger-beer bottle standing upon the kitchen table?'

'Yes, there was,' admitted cook.

'A glass bottle? With a label on it? And a glass marble in it? The label was like this one, was it not?' said Toby, showing her the label from Soapy's book.

'Yes,' answered the cook to all the questions.

'What became of the bottle, cook?'

'I told Mogo to put it away. Oh, I am as sure as sure is sure that blackamoor stole the prince's blood-alley, so there!'

'What did Mogo do with the bottle?' continued Toby.

'That I do not know,' the cook declared. 'I gave it to her, but now I cannot find it at all. I have hunted everywhere.'

'That bottle,' Toby went on, 'was in the kitchen when the prince and Soapy went to tea. Soon afterwards Mogo had it in her possession. When I searched for clues this morning, I found that bottle lying broken in the dust-bin. I also saw from certain indications that it had been broken on purpose on the angle of the pump.'

Toby solemnly repeated: '*It had been broken on purpose!* Why? Why should anybody in a kitchen wilfully break a bottle that ought to be returned? I will tell you. That person wanted something which was *in* the bottle; they wanted, in short, the glass marble.'

Toby paused and glanced over his attentive audience.

'Go on!' moaned the crowned king. 'Oh, go on! I cannot bear it much longer.'

'Why,' proceeded Toby, 'should anybody in a royal kitchen want a marble at all? I will tell you. Close to the drainpipe in the courtyard I found a tiny heap of white ash and flakes. Beside it was a round black mark, which I perceived was soot. The black mark had been made by a kettle standing there. The white flaked ash had been emptied from the kettle. That kettle must have been thickly coated inside with these flakes. Now it is well known that a marble left inside a kettle will prevent this flaky deposit. It is clear then that this kettle had not had any marble in its inside. Why is that? I will tell you. It is because – have you never noticed it? – marbles are seldom found in a royal kitchen. Now some one in the kitchen had been to fill the kettle at the pump, but seeing the foul state of the kettle's inside, had emptied it of this deposit beside the drain. The ashes are still there and so is the sooty mark made by the kettle. Then she filled the

kettle, returned to the kitchen, put kettle on fire, and began to toast some more crumpets.

'Yes,' the cook cried out angrily; 'I told you it was that blackamoor!'

'True,' answered Toby, 'it was Mogo who cleaned out the kettle. She is a blackamoor and walks barefoot. I saw her footprints. She had just finished toasting a crumpet when her eyes caught sight of the ginger-beer bottle, and seeing the marble inside it she picked up the bottle straight away, and, with the toasting-fork still in her other hand, ran round to the pump. She wanted to get the marble out of the bottle to put in the kettle and keep the kettle's inside clean. And she broke the bottle on the angle of the pump.'

Toby paused again and smiled, but as he glanced over the faces of the multitude he could not see anywhere the faintest glimmer of an answering smile.

'I hope,' he proceeded, 'that I have made everything clear to all of you, and that you have been able to follow me with these clues.'

'Yes, yes,' the crowned king snapped; 'but I shall not be able to bear it much longer.'

'Then,' continued Toby, 'a curious thing happened. As the bottle broke, the glass marble somehow disappeared. It shot off somewhere, and Mogo did not see where it went. There were all the pieces of the broken bottle lying on the ground before

'She darted to the ring . . . and snatched up what she took to be the glass marble.'

her, but no glass marble – the marble had gone; in other words, the marble was not there. Mogo was probably amazed. She probably stood at the pump, with the toasting-fork in her left hand, staring about, looking for the glass marble, when suddenly she saw it, as she thought, lying in a ring. She darted to the ring – her footprints are discernible with a magnifying glass – and snatched up what she took to be the glass marble. As she stooped to pick it up the toasting-fork slipped out of her hand and made three marks inside the ring with its prongs. I also found a crumb of crumpet there; it must have been sticking to the fork. Well, then, Mogo must have cleared up the broken bottle and put the pieces in the dust-bin; but the label had slipped off – it was not stuck on securely – and Mogo left it lying beside the pump. Not long after Mogo had gone, some one in sandals came down, without being seen by anybody. The sandal marks have blotted out parts of Mogo's footprints. So they must have been made *after* Mogo's. Perhaps the person in sandals came to steal the blood-alley – I cannot say. I only know he stole down for some secret purpose. But he came too late; he could not find what he wanted. He was so startled that he shut up the book he was pretending to read. Before doing so he picked up a label that caught his eye and used it as a book-mark. He searched around in vain – the blood-alley was gone.'

'Yes,' roared the crowned monarch; 'but where is it now?'

'Why,' answered Toby quite mildly, 'it is in cook's kettle, of course.'

At once everybody leaped up with a yell, and headed by the cook scampered across the lawn, helter-skelter through the gardens, smashing, puffing, moaning and groaning until they came to the kitchen. The cook snatched the lid off the kettle and peered inside. It was rather dark in the kettle and she could see nothing, so she took it where it was lighter. Then she gave a yell: 'Yes, it is here!'

And with her finger and thumb she held up the prince's peerless blood-alley. Whereupon Toby took off the placard that had been hung round his neck, and gave it to the janitor.

CHAPTER XV

THE SNOOPING BARNACLE

THE cook declared Toby Tottel was as sharp as a tailor's nose, and the king said he was a wise boy, so wise that if he remained in their country they would make a man of him in no time, and then it stood to reason he would be in great danger of becoming something very aristocratic, he need not quite mention what. Toby said he was much obliged, but he had only done his duty, because he knew that whenever a royal blood-alley got mislaid like that it was most desperate.

'True,' said the voluble king. 'I must at once reward you. I will grant any request that lies in my power, even to a couple of thousand' – here the king coughed casually – 'couple of thousand volumes.'

Toby explained that he was in search of one book, and one book only, the *Open and Ask Me*.

The king replied that he feared they had not got that book. He thought it had been in the royal library once upon a time, but it must have been sold by sale. If, however, Toby Tottel would accept the office of Noble Companion to the prince, they would leave no page unturned in their search for the whereabouts of the *Open and Ask Me*.

Toby said 'Done.' And as soon as he said that he was whisked away into the palace and clapped into a pair of pink velvet trousers, with a yellow tunic, and thus became N.C. to the prince and lived like a lord for a longish time.

But it was a topsy-turvy country to dwell in. Toby was sure he would never get used to their habits, and he resolved to go away as soon as a chance arose. In Purganda no man ever did any work except writing and reading. Save at the royal palace, all the work was done by women, the soldiers were all females, and the government was carried on wholly by ladies, except in the case of the Prime Minister, Snooping Barnacle, and they were not few who referred to him as an old woman. Men stayed at home and lived elegant lives, for it was the dearest wish of every woman's heart to see her husband clad in garments more beautiful, or else more costly, than any other woman's husband. What with the price of velvet and the frailty of silk, the poor women could only afford shoddy material for their own wretched limbs. The one craze common to both sexes was the passion for reading. Everybody in Purganda passed the greater part of his or her waking life in absorbing the contents of printed pages; the greatest honour in Purganda was to be an author, and the strange thing was that nearly everybody did in time become an author. In so doing it was thought they brought glory to

their race. Every Purgandian was born in the faith, lived in the faith, and was prepared to die in the faith, that Purganda was the greatest, the wisest, the loveliest, the happiest, the noblest, and the most perfect realm under the sun; and if indeed that can or could be said of any country, past, present, or future, it might just as well be said of Purganda.

It is true that these people had one or two problems that caused deep anxiety. A very large palace in the city was for the use of the blind, for blindness seemed to smite the eyes of Purgandians far more often than any other people in the world. Yet Toby liked to go to the Blind House because there, in contrast to the world outside, nobody read and everybody talked, talked endlessly, as if having had thought and speech pent up for so long it now gushed forth in fountains. One-fourth of the whole population was blind, and so the country had to maintain them. Heavy though the burden was, it was nobly borne; the blind indeed were charming.

In another huge palace, twice as large as the Blind House, dwelled the people who had gone mad. For it was the tragedy of Purganda that at an early age you either went blind or you went mad. You could not help it – you went. Yet to belong to either of these two communities has been regarded for centuries as an honour or a blessing; it was an honour to be blind, a blessing to be mad. The more lunatics you had in your pedigree the more

your family was esteemed. Well, half the entire population was insane, and so the country had to maintain them. It was a grievous burden, but nobly borne, though the lunatics were ungrateful and not to be trusted. The remaining fourth of the population was sane and sighted for the time being, and kept the mad and the blind in ease and comfort; but things had come to such a pass in Purganda that the sane and sighted began to murmur and complain:

'Something must be done, or we are undone.'

'I will do it!' cried Snooping Barnacle, the Prime Minister.

'What will you do?'

Snooping Barnacle ordered all books which contained the letter X to be abolished.

'Nonsense!' The authors could not write their books without the letter X, booksellers could not sell, and readers could not bear to read.

The letter X, Snooping Barnacle solemnly declared, was responsible for everything – or some part of it, if not more. Therefore anybody who printed X, who wrote or spoke X, or even looked X, would be abolished without compensation.

Large bodies of writers and readers poured in deputations to Snooping Barnacle, and averred that they loved X, that they could not live without X, and pointed out that if the letter X was abolished the doom of everything was signed and sealed.

'So much the better!' cried Snooping Barnacle.

'That foul letter imperils the sight and deranges the mind. Unchided you have all pursued degraded courses and averted your eyes from the pellucid truth. But I learnt truth at my mama's knee, and what I learnt at mama's knee has been my guiding star through weals and woes. Had none of you a mama? Or hadn't she a knee?'

'Yes,' replied the leader of a deputation, 'I had a mother with two knees, but I remember she only told me lies.'

'Friend, do not blame me for that,' Barnacle retorted. 'I am here only to do my plain duty.'

Well, when it came to abolishing the books with the letter X, this letter was found to be printed in everything except some state reports on *Backwash from Canal Barges*, *The Origin and Function of Clothes Lines*, and a few cognate subjects. It was really unpleasant. It stared at you from the most unlikely books, books by infant prophets, incredulous deans, and even simple bishops. Bishops, as a race, are not simple by nature, only by misfortune; until then they are not even actively simple; but Purganda was notorious for bishops of all sorts, even one like this:

'We had a crooked bishop once,
With geometric views,
His texts were perpendicular,
His sermons quite obtuse;

'Large bodies of writers and readers poured in deputations to Snooping Barnacle.'

And tho' the hymns were High Church,
The blessed tunes were Low,
So we had to sing them sideways
In acute fortissimo.'

When it was revealed to Snooping Barnacle that his scheme could not be carried out, he said:

'Blame me not, but trust me. I am here only to do my plain duty and carry out the law.'

'Well,' cried all the sane and sighted people, 'something must be done, or we are undone.'

'Then I,' Snooping firmly declared, 'am the one to do it. Listen. It has been brought to my notice that for years many copies of the Book of Bandogs have had their capital letters printed in blue instead of green. I will abolish them.'

'But why?' screamed the people.

'Because,' Snooping said, 'it is against the law. I did not make the law, but I must see that the law is obeyed.'

'But,' cried some, 'we like blue capital letters, we adore them. Why cannot we have our capital letters blue if we want them blue?'

'Far be it from me,' Snooping sadly replied, 'to condemn any one for being absurd, so long as the absurdity is pure and wholesome and sincere. But this is not the case. I say it is not. Blue is foul, blue is bunkum. It must be abolished.'

Oh, the torrents of fury that at once swayed this

hitherto peaceful people! They bit their finger-nails and refused to speak to each other.

'Do not blame me,' groaned the unfortunate Barnacle. 'Laws are not made by me. Mine is but the melancholy task of seeing that they are obeyed.'

A shocking contest ensued and the entire country, excepting the lunatics and the blind, divided upon the question: Will you have green bandogs, or will you have your bandogs blue? So much violence stalked abroad that civil war in Purganda was only averted by the happy occurrence of a plague of carbuncles. Every soul in Purganda contracted one little, two little, three little, or even four little carbuncles on that most awkward member, the nose; and the strange thing was that people who believed in the blue capital letters had green carbuncles on their noses, while those who favoured green capital letters had to be content with blue carbuncles. This was quite rightly taken as a Sign, because, as soon as the dispute was abolished, the carbuncles disappeared. As for the Book of Bandogs, the printing ink faded quite soon, and when you could not tell if the capitals were green or blue everybody was content.

But still the awful burden remained on the shoulders of the sane and sighted.

'Something must be done, or we are undone.'

So then Snooping Barnacle set the Yeomen of the Baton, a wealthy cohort of guardians, to spy upon

any Purgandian who was thought to be reading books with extra large numbers of the letter X in them, or who seemed to prefer that letter to most others, but it only provoked another loud outcry. Barnacle was indignant, as well as pained.

'Do not blame these fine protectors of our liberty. We have to trust them, and we must trust them. They are only doing their plain duty. They need your confidence, your help. Hands off these yeomen. I say, give the yeomen a chance.' And so on.

'Oh yes,' the people said; 'we do not mind giving them a chance, but we will not give them the shirts off our backs.'

And that was how affairs stood when Toby Tottel arrived in Purganda and became the N.C. of the prince. Of course Toby knew better than to meddle in politics, although he saw at a glance the plain case for that terrible problem. His one desire and hope was to find the Book of Wisdom, and then pass on to the final goal of Pink Furniture. So earnestly did he study to this end, that in a very short space of time he was hot upon the track of the mysterious volume.

CHAPTER XVI

TWO LETTERS

IT was not very long before Toby wrote this letter to his sweetheart, informing her of the doings in Purganda. Some of the words are not written with very nice spelling, although Toby is a good scholar. This is because the language in that country is often not nice and makes the pencil giddy.

'DEAR BRIDGET,

'I got to a rum place where I where pink trousers and a thing like a wastcote of yello. I do not care to have it on me. But no pink furniture I am after it like a long dog where it is all in a boke of the open and ask me. Soon as I will find it shall op the twig and come back to marry you amen. Dear Bridget I am so fond of you and when I dreamed of you up in a baloon I was most full of sorrow but now I love you better than this Priceless princess as I told her not to keep on kissing me because it is hopeless. Her hair is gold but yours is golder.

'the people here are awfool the chaps keep on read read read and the others do the work but they

reads too and will not speak when they are spoke to, but I do not like any of these books they are awfool so I go to the blind house and talk to the blind but they do talk a lot of nuisance. So the prince is awfool I have to look after him and keep his bloodalley from losing it. He says to me shall I tell you the story of my life? and when I said Do so, he tells me his grandfather had a pair of double shuffles once; and then he begins to cry. What are you howling for now, I said, and he says because the story of my life is so sad. Dont tell me then I said, he says but I've just told you. So then I won his bloodalley off him and to keep it in my pocket safe from these blackamores.

'I am glad this is not my native land because your native land is often supreme for society. Half of these natives is mad as a lunatic and one quart is blind as a book so the others nearly all write a book and spends there time reading the other peoples book to find out how bad it is and if it is not so bad off he goes and becomes a lunatic. I like books but if they start up maddening me I shall not have much to do with such books. There are such nice book shops in Hedgehog Market and I returns to my native shore when we will all go there to buy a bargain. that was where the lady paid me a lodestone to draw nails out of a horses shoe but no horses in this country so I can not be sure yet if but I expect it is nothing but truthful. I like the best

thing here is the museum full of history like the portrait of a pink chair which it is not to do with the pink furniture but lifelike must be painted from life because it has 4 legs very pink. It is jonnick.

'So now this is all at present I wish I saw you often because when I think of you sometimes I want to run all the way till I find you. If it is ever so far I must must come dear Bridget your hair is lovely and you are nice and proud so no more at present. From your

loving T. TOTTEL. N.C.

'P.S.—Please do not make a song in your letters about any washing in your letters.'

So then he thought he would write a letter to little Janey-Loo:

'DEAR JANEY-LOO,

'It is such a long time since I see you little darling but I do think of you much and when it is fine I know you will sit on the common and look at the pigeons on Mr. Ollaboys barn. Or else you will go todling after them butterflies but they are artful and your belly is so fat as a little pigs. I think I shall bring you home a pretty carpet so we can go the common to beat it with nice sticks and make the dust fly and then we go for a ride in the butcher's cart good-bye here is a piece of poetry for you

Yours affly

TOBY.

'Here comes the butcher on his cart,
He brings for us so spruce and smart
A pound of suet and no more –
That leg of mutton goes next door.

I'd like to work in butcher shops
And carve up sausages and chops.
Or drive about in frantic haste
With lots of skewers round my waist.

But he is rather cruel, they say;
He kills a lamb most every day,
With lovely calves so white and red,
And chops them up when they are dead.'

So he sealed up both these letters and posted them. What a careless fellow! He quite forgot to put his address in the letters, but it did not matter, because he did not stop much longer in the Island of Purganda.

CHAPTER XVII

OLD CANTIPPER

IT was from one of the blind men that Toby at last heard news of the *Open and Ask Me*, from an old man in a sandy mantle, with a long white beard folded in plaits, and a sugar-loaf hat. Every day while the little prince was practising his Social Service – that is to say, while he was brushing and spitting and breathing on the seven pairs of royal goloshes to make them gleam like a bald man's head – at such times, I say, Toby went to the Blind House and talked to old Cantipper – that was his name – who told him when and where the Book of Wisdom was last heard of. It was not in the Island of Purganda at all; it was not there. Once it had been the chief glory of the island, but centuries ago it was sold for the sake of the sale and taken away to some common country. When Toby inquired of him what country, old Cantipper was stumped, he was so stumped that he was entirely vexed.

'I can't think now where that precious book has gone to, and I can't think why I can't think of it!'

'Oh, do please think hard,' cried Toby.

'I will,' replied Cantipper, 'but I can't think at this moment, not if you was to give me a hatful of

snuff, I couldn't. I . . . do . . . not . . . know. But I *will* think of it. I will do my very hardest.'

'Yes,' Toby begged of him, 'think of it most firmly.'

Cantipper promised to think of nothing else until he thought of it, and then he would remember, and of course then he would know.

'And then you will tell me?' Toby said anxiously.

'Certainly, my boy. I will tell you if I remember what I know I think about, but an old man's ears are full of wax, and the thoughts slide out of my head like quicksilver.'

One day Toby and Cantipper went down to the shore together. Tap, top, tip, went the old blind man's stick until they came to the shore, and there it was sandy, smooth, and quiet.

'Now,' said old blind Cantipper, 'whereabouts is the sun?'

Toby pushed him round until he was facing the sun, and the old man began to twirl his stick rapidly, and mumbled:

'Tin, tin, tin.
What is the meaning of it?'

Then he threw the stick up into the air and cried:

'That is the meaning of it.
Tin, tin, tin!'

When it fell and lay still on the sand, he asked Toby which way the stick was pointing. Toby told him the end was pointing to the west.

'One day Toby and Cantipper went down to the shore together.'

'Ah,' cried old Cantipper, 'that is where it lies, the country of Patcat! Listen, boy. In the middle of Patcat there is a secret orchard, but what grows in it I never heard. In the middle of that orchard is a small red temple, but what for, nobody has ever known. In the middle of the temple there is a large square block of red sandstone with a blue tablecloth on it. On the cloth stand three small lamps, each burning perfumed oil, and in the middle of them lies the Book of Wisdom called *Open and Ask Me*. But nobody ever opens that book. It is guarded from view by a gigantic fellow who lives on frogs' teeth and the bones of ants.'

Toby began to squirm and get excitable, for he remembered that the owl with the spyglass had said something about the bones of ants, but old Cantipper remained very solemn and precise.

'The giant is seventeen times bigger than any giant ever born before or since, and his teeth are made of iron. Don't ask me his name,' continued Cantipper sternly. 'The king of Patcat has never died in the memory of man or of history, and now I suppose he never will. He has a daughter who was not born but merely arrived, and she does not grow old because she lives with great care. She is simply lovely, sings songs out of an album, and keeps monkeys. Do not ask me her name. Now the king promised the hand of his daughter and a share of his taxes to any young hero who could discover

the secret of the temple in the orchard. Time and again some hero calls upon the princess, and when he hears of the great prize he determines to fall in love with her and go and find out this secret. First he stops in the palace with the princess and he soon falls deeply in love with her, because she is most handsome and kind. Still, he cannot go on like that for ever, so at last he makes up his mind and says: "Now I am off to kill the giant. Please marry me at once." The princess generally loves him very much, but of course it is impossible to marry him just like that.

' "No. I like and respect you," the princess says, "but I don't think I will marry you in case you get killed. And," she adds sorrowfully, "you are sure to be."

' "No fear!" the hero responds, with a gallant smile – but he always is!

'Thus the matter stands in Patcat to this very day,' concluded the blind Cantipper. 'What is the secret of that temple standing in that orchard in the middle of Patcat? Nobody knows, T.T. Nobody knows; not the king, not the princess, not even the giant. Once they knew it; but you know how things fade. They have long since forgotten what the secret was, so they would not recognize it now even if it were found by somebody. Now what can you do about a thing like that?'

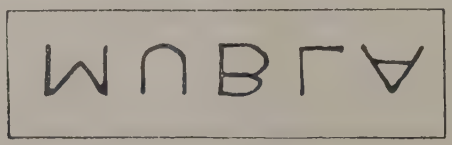
'How far off is Patcat?' inquired Toby.

'It is across the western sea,' said Cantipper. 'You sail for two days and two nights.'

'I shall go to Patcat,' Toby said; 'it seems a nice place.'

So he picked up Cantipper's stick for him and they went toddling back together. Then Toby began to prepare for the voyage, keeping it very secret from the prince and all the Purgandians at the palace, because he feared they would not allow him to leave them. He had his pocket-handkerchief cleaned, polished up the penny farthing which he had not been able to spend, and put his lodestone safely in his pocket. There were many fine ships in the harbour, all bound for Patcat, but he would not pay for a voyage in any of them because he had only got one penny farthing. What was to be done about that?

Of course he knew what had to be done, and so he did it. But in the afternoon of that last day the little prince came staggering on to the lawn pushing the gardener's huge wheelbarrow, and in the wheelbarrow was a huge book. Well, Toby Tottel had never seen any book half that size, not a quarter that size, even in a bank. The title of the book was printed in very large clear print:



only it happened to be upside down, which is an old custom in Purganda.

'N.C.' began the prince, 'you have not written anything in my album yet! Please do so. You promised.'

He pulled from his ear a long feathered quill pen, and lifting a pot of royal ink out of the wheelbarrow, placed them carefully on the grass.

'Help me, please, N.C.,' said the prince.

So the prince and Toby heaved and hauled at the album until they got it out of the wheelbarrow and laid it flat on the grass beside the quill pen and the inkstand. Then Toby knelt down before the album.

It was bound in bison calf of a most delicate shade, and Toby's keen eye saw at once that it was a First Edition!

'You know,' said he to the prince severely, 'you ought not to use this book; you ought not ever to open it, or read it, or even handle it. You ought to wrap it up in some waterproof tissue and keep it in the meat-safe.'

'But what should I do for an album?' inquired the little prince.

'Oh,' replied Toby, 'you could keep on thinking and thinking about it.'

As the mischief was already done Toby opened the book, but he was hardly prepared for the terrible sight that met his indignant gaze. When he saw that every page of that first edition had been cut

open his courage was quite broken, he almost suffocated with horror, and the tears gushed down his boyish cheeks. Alas, alas!

After the tears had dispersed he found himself gazing at the first entry in the album:

'*You need not remember to do your one bad deed a day – Life is easy.*

'Soapy Barnacle.'

The prince, who had been waiting impatiently, now dipped the great quill pen in the inkpot and pushed it into Toby's fingers.

'Write something, please, quick. I prefer poetry.'

'What sort of poetry?'

'Nice poetry,' said the prince.

'What sort of nice poetry?'

'I should like,' the prince mused, 'a nice poem about a hunter. When I grow up I am going to hunt bears, and then I am going to hunt weasels, and then I am going to hunt murderers, and then I am going to . . .'

'Look here,' interrupted Toby. 'Go away! I must have peace and quiet while the poetry is to be composed.'

'But, really, you know,' protested the little prince mildly, 'I am the editor of this book. Understand, you must write only on one side of the paper, and you have to enclose a stamped addressed envelope.'

'Well, then, I shan't write anything at all,' said Toby.

'Oh, yes, yes,' cried the prince, 'do it how you please.'

Then the prince walked away like the little gentleman he was, while Toby began to ponder and brood very poetically. Hunter, hunter – he kept on murmuring – hunter, punter, shunter; and at last he wrote it out in the prince's album, neat and tidy, and put in brackets (*Copyright restrained*) because Albumeers are so unscrupulous :

'Harpy and Hunter
Went for a bath
In the Gulf Stream,
Harpy and Hunter:
One fat as a target,
The other a lath;
Excellent
Harpy and Hunter.

Harpy and Hunter
Were caught by the tide –
Oh, look at them!
Harpy and Hunter!
One of them drowned,
The other cried;
How pitiful,
Harpy and Hunter!

Harpy (or Hunter –
I never knew which)
Was haunted by
Harpy (or Hunter)
Till a sexton at last
Provided a niche
For the other one,
Harpy (or Hunter).'

When the prince came and read the poem, he remarked: 'It is very sad, is it not?'

'Why, yes, I meant it to be,' said Toby.

'Would you mind telling me,' the prince said, 'which was the hunter; was he the fat one?'

'I *could* tell you if I tried,' Toby answered consolingly, 'but I rather think we ought to let bygones *be* bygones.'

CHAPTER XVIII

THE *BAG OF NUTS*

AT night Toby crept out of the palace. At the gate the guard stood reading by candlelight in his sentry box. The bright sword was ready in his hand, but his eyes and nose were concerned only with the book he was perusing. His two ears were fixed neatly to the sides of his head, but they were deaf to all save the siren voice of the Muse, or they might even have heard the bumping of the boy's heart as he drew nigh. Toby's heart trembled so that it craved to be taken back to the palace, but his legs were fairly trembling to go on, and then courage carried him forward past the studious soldier, along the blackened street, until he came to the harbour where he breathed freely once more.

There was a soft breeze blowing up the wharf wall, a few lights shone on silent ships, a shred of new moon lay aloft in the west, and he could hear black water rolling sleepily past the harbour bar. He crept along a jetty towards a green light, and soon beheld dimly the vessel he had chosen to convey him to the shore of Patcat. It was the brigantine *Bag of Nuts*, its yards hanging loose, ready to haul at dawn when light came and the tide

favoured. A gang-plank stretched from the quay-side to the ship's taffrail, ready for the sailors to come aboard after their final carousal in the Purgandian taverns. There was a notice hung up there for them, *Please take great care of yourselves*. Toby darted across this plank like a cat, and hid on deck behind a coil of rope. A long time he lay hid by the rope, but he heard no sounds aboard. There was a lantern hanging from a gaff and he could see a faint glow from a hatchway on the bows. At last he crawled warily to the hatchway and peeped down the ladder. He could only see two rows of bunks and a shelf with crumbs on it. Down the ladder he went as careful as a caterpillar, and beyond the bunks he came upon the hold, almost empty except for a few woolly bales. Here he made himself comfortable, and as he had brought enough food to last him a couple of days, he had a frugal meal, and then stretching himself between the woolly bales, he fell asleep.

When he awoke he was astonished to find the ship was away at sea, he had slept a long time, he could just catch a glimpse of sunlight peeping down the hatchway, and there were two men sleeping in the bunks. Overhead he could hear the captain shouting, the men answering, the trotting of feet. Then the ship would heave and heave and thump the waves. Toby lay hid, being in mortal terror of these men. It had been his intention to lend them a hand now and again, but he was too

much in awe of them to reveal himself now. The captain never descended that hatchway, but Toby soon saw the other men, six of them, all tiny bow-bodied men with bushy black whiskers and bald heads, and he was sure they were villainous. Toby feared them terribly; they did not look nice sailors at all, they were up to mischief.

That evening in the dogwatch the wind had freshened and the ship rolled. It was not quite dark, but the lantern on the forecastle beam was alight and shone on the naughty faces of four of these dangerous men as they hobnobbed and talked about the deeds of a certain Captain Bill Puggly. Their own names were Mick, Dick, Nick, and Chick, and Chick was saying:

'Ah, my poor dear Bill Puggly! He was the best pirate I ever went a-roving with; he was a good man. No nonsense about him, a fine desperate man. If any interfering person came along and said, "What lovely weather we are having!" Bill would kill him. And if he didn't say it, Bill would kill him just the same. And poor old Bill, he was such a good, kind chap to his parents before he murdered them. Always paid them a visit in the workhouse after his voyages, always very civil and asked them how they were. Oh, he had a heart like a pair of bellows, my poor dear Bill. Then he went and got caught by the King of the Grocers and that was the end of him.'

'Hung him, I suppose?' said Nick.

'No, no. No fear. Not a bit of it. He was tried by the parish and condemned to relief, but the King of the Grocers took a hand and that sentence was never properly carried out. Not to my mind. Do you know what they did to Bill? Well, listen; I'm going to tell you something. They took a cheese wire, you know, the kind of wire they cut up cheeses with, and they put it round my poor dear Bill's waist and pulled it tight until, lo and behold! my poor Bill was in halves, just like a cheese.'

'That was not fair at all,' declared Nick.

'Fair!' cried Chick, with contempt. 'Why, the poor chap didn't even *know* he was in halves – not for a minute or two. I don't call that doing good to your neighbours. Somebody ought to have been spoken to about it. Then they put the big half of him on this king's bacon machine and cut two hundred and seventy-two rashers off him before they came to his larnax, and that broke the machine. So they put my poor Bill's head in the coffee roaster, and when they had roasted it good and nicely and his teeth melted, they put it in the coffee mill and ground him up into grouts and gave that to the hens to encourage them to lay browner eggs. Which they did. But, bless my heart, I never go into a grocer's shop now without thinking of my poor dear Bill Puggly. As for cheese, I cannot bear to smell it, and a rasher of bacon makes me very very thoughtful.'

Toby Tottel listened not one moment longer. He crawled as gently as any caterpillar into the deepest darkest depths of the hold and buried himself under the woolly bales, but although he had resolved to sell his young life dearly, he somehow could not get to sleep. Through that long and dreary night he lay while the sea thundered against the *Bag of Nuts* and the seamen snored. He thought much of poor Bill Puggly, and sometimes he thought of the Flying Klacken, or of Mr. Adhemar, but still he could not sleep.

At dawn wind and wave had subsided, but a wild tumult suddenly crashed out, all the sailors screaming and stamping, and then Toby was almost stunned by the terrific roar from a cannon on deck above his head. It shook the *Bag of Nuts* from stem to stern and from top to bottom. The six sailors at once cried 'Hooray!' so Toby concluded that their guilty cannon ball had hit something. Being an honest lad he could no longer contain himself, so doing a very rapid creep he gained the ladder of the hatchway. Up this he climbed, just far enough to take a quiz round, and what a sight met his eyes! Shocking! At the peak a black flag, with a white skull and cross-bones crochetted on it, was flying. A short distance off on the sea lay another ship, bending over as if she was about to be rather unwell, and her crew were in a boat beyond her rowing away for dear heart. Toby had only time to catch

a glimpse of these things, and then with good prudence he darted below again.

The pirates allowed their enemies to escape, dropped anchor, and prepared a hearty meal of scrambled eggs on toast. They had time, plenty of time. At length the boats were lowered, and as the day passed the cargo from the stricken ship was hauled aboard the *Bag of Nuts*. When the main hatch was opened, Toby stood in danger of discovery at any moment, while scroons of indigo and tierces of coffee, and some sticky merchandise, were stowed in the guilty barque, but by the favour of fortune he was not detected.

'Haul away, my lads!' cried the wild captain, 'our fortunes are made.'

'Ay, ay, sir,' replied Chick, 'but I don't much like this coffee; it reminds me of my poor Bill Puggly.'

Night came, and the guilty men spent the hours in carousing and singing a merry chant. Toby was not able to make merry; he was what you might venture to call perfectly ill at ease, but all the same it was a merry chant:

'On a landfall dark
Came the pirates' barque,
Its plunder to bestow:
Lots of indigo and coffee,
With some butterscotch and toffee.
O my coffee and my in-di-go!

I will haul my freight
Said the bold sea mate
Come rain, come hail, come snow;
With my indigo and coffee
And my butterscotch and toffee.
O my coffee and my in-di-go!

But the coastguard he
Said, "This can never be,
My children weep below,
Not for indigo and coffee
But for butterscotch and toffee."
O my coffee and my in-di-go!

Then the mate made a fuss
With his bully blunderbuss,
And away that guard did go,
Leaving indigo and coffee,
All the butterscotch and toffee.
O my coffee and my in-di-go!

And the pirate crew
Sang Hullabullaloo!
Ya ha! Ya he! Ya ho!
Take your indigo and coffee,
Give us butterscotch and toffee.
O my coffee and my in-di-go!'

Tottel was tired, Tottel was hungry, and at last, overpowered by the fumes of the coffee in the hold, he fell asleep and dreamed he was devouring a rasher of bacon as big as a hearthrug. He was

awakened by a heavy hand grasping the collar of his jacket, and there was the wild captain dragging him from his hiding-place up on to the deck by the neck like a dead goose.

The guilty crew gathered round and asked him dozens of questions all at one time, but Toby told them simply that he was merely a stowaway desiring to go to Patcat, and he begged them to lose no time as he was in rather a hurry now.

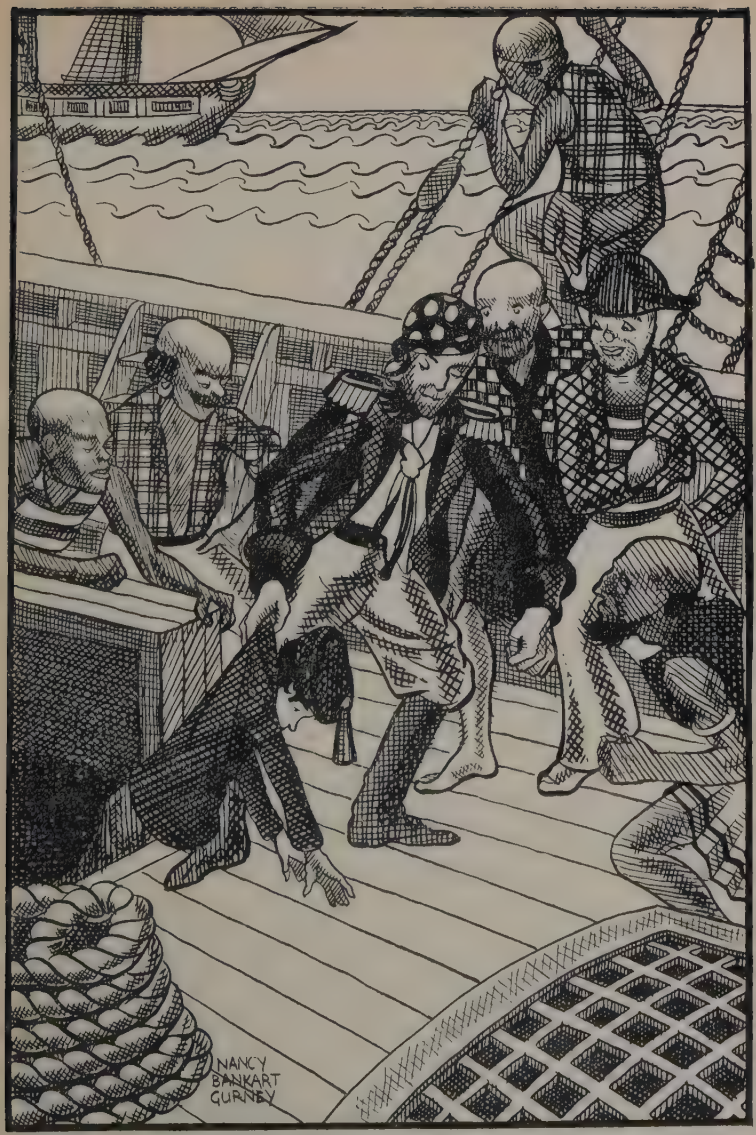
'Bless his heart!' cried the wild captain, 'up anchor, my bullies, at once!'

But Mick, Dick, Nick, and Chick, with Filbert and Orlando, shook their heads, and Chick said:

' I don't like the looks of him, captain; I don't like them at all.'

For some time they discussed the fate of our hero, and Toby could not be certain whether they wanted to cook him, or whether they wanted him to be cook, but though he was lost on the wild ocean and in the hands of desperate men, he showed no fear, not an atom. The white feather had no place in his locker. Not that he had any locker, but he knew it was no good using a corkscrew on pieces of sponge cake.

The guilty pirates beetled their brows, muttering savagely, and at last the captain signed to Toby and informed him that it was agreed he was to become their cook; therefore he must go and light the stove in the other ship at once.



'There was the wild captain dragging him from his hiding-place up on to the deck, by the neck, like a dead goose.'

Toby looked across at the other ship. It was standing upright now, as well as ever it stood in its life, and lightly rolling. Said he would be pleased to do anything for them. Followed Chick over the side of the *Bag of Nuts*, down a rope ladder that waggled very nasty, into a little boat that would not sit still, and Chick rowed him across to the other vessel. The name of it, painted on its tail, was the *Nutcracker*. When they got to the foot of a little iron ladder: 'Up you go,' said Chick, 'and mind you cook the breakfast smart. I'm going to fetch the captain now,' continued Chick, as he rowed away, 'so mind you are mighty quick, and light the fire in the cook's galley; it's already laid for you.'

Off rowed Chick in great haste then, while Toby climbed up the ladder. After searching, he found the cook's galley, but he could not light the fire because he could not find any matches. Judge of his surprise on looking into the stove to find it stuffed to the brim with gunpowder! By the time Toby got up on deck again, Chick was aboard the *Bag of Nuts*, and that guilty vessel was already under weigh. A light broke in on the mind of the boy. Ah! ha! They had thought to blow him sky-high and the ship too! What base fellows they were! How most unkind! But Toby did not mind that, he was free of them now. Quite by chance he felt the lodestone in his pocket just then. He had carried it with him ever since he had received it in Hedgehog Market, and

he remembered what it could do. Now he drew it out of his pocket and recited the mystic words:

'*Lodestone, born of rock and fire,*
Render me my true desire.'

Immediately he received several sharp blows on the head, and a shower of small objects began to rattle on the deck of *The Nutcracker*. He dropped the lodestone at once and cowered down for protection behind a barrel. The shower continued to pour like sharp hail, and he saw that every object was a nail, flying from the *Bag of Nuts* to his wonderful magnetic lodestone. Many of the nails hit the side of the vessel, but they wriggled up and over and swarmed along the deck like snakes, piling themselves up on the lodestone until they hid it completely. Still they came flying frantically, and in a second or two the pile of nails was big as a bread loaf. Almost before he could think of that, the pile of nails was as big as a barrel, and when he looked across to the *Bag of Nuts* he saw that guilty barque falling to pieces because all her nails had been torn from all her planks and were rushing to his lodestone. In a few more moments the shower of nails stopped, the barque was broken and slithering to pieces, and the pirates were all drowning or had already been safely drowned. So Toby went rummaging in the cook's galley and found some dunderfunk and lobster, of which he was very very fond, and partook of a hearty breakfast.

After that he scarce knew what to do. Alone on the wild ocean Toby was but a boy at the mercy of the rude elements. He resolved to get hold of his lodestone and think of something, but the lodestone was buried under a great stack of nails and he could not move one of them; they clove to each other as if petrified. So he thought and thought, and then said:

'Lodestone, born of rock and fire,
Render me my true desire:
Off with you nails!'

Every nail at once obediently leapt into the sea with great splashes, leaving the precious lodestone lying on the deck.

So here he was alone on the stout craft *Nutcracker*, where there was happily an abundance of tinned peaches, strawberry jam, and suchlike hard tack that poor sailors have to live on. The ship was at anchor, but a boy could not get an anchor up by himself; it must have weighed nearly a ton. He might have picked it up with his lodestone, but even if he got the anchor up the sails were all tumbled and flapping anyhow. And if the sails had been all right he did not know where he was. Had he even known that, he did not know where Patcat was, so how was he to get there? No matter how you look at it he was in a sort of a pickle. But a pickle goes well with hard tack, and if ever hard tack is your fate and fortune, remember that fortune

changes while time flies and nothing lasts for ever, not even a pickle.

The sea kept on shaking itself about in the sunlight and lolled along very amiable. When he sighted some birds not far off, he thought he would try to get the anchor up and let the *Nutcracker* drift. Anything was better than staying still, she might drift somewhere. So Toby put the lodestone down on the deck near the anchor-chain, and got himself into a safe place before asking the anchor to come up, because you see if the anchor behaved anything like those nails did, it would surely murder him. When he wished the anchor to come up, up came the anchor very courteously, and as it flopped down on the deck the lodestone jumped on it. Toby pulled the magic lodestone off the anchor and put it into his pocket for safety. The ship began to drift. So far, so good.

For two days and nights the *Nutcracker* drifted, and on the third morning, when he got out of the captain's bunk to look over the side of the ship, Toby saw something extremely adjacent, and it was LAND HO! Soon the ship glided on to a sandbank, then she began to slink over on to her side. In an hour the tide had ebbed and left the *Nutcracker* high and dry with sand all around her. Toby climbed down and walked ashore.

'Now,' thought he, 'I am a castaway.'

CHAPTER XIX

THE FAUN

ON he went until he came to a noble green plain furnished with darker bushes, and not far off upon it a shining solitary hill. On every side were animals – hares, hedgehogs, squirrels, and moles – with many other living things, all going along gaily towards the hill. Like flowers flitting in the air were the butterflies, silver, turquoise, and vermilion; and there were butterfellows – those, of course, are the yellow ones. Nor did those gada-abouts, the birds, dally in the sky; siskins, finches, wheatears, wrynecks, wrens, all took their flight towards the hill, and the turf was alive with spiders, grasshoppers, and many creeping things all going that way.

'One way is as good as another to me,' said Toby. 'I will go there too.'

On he fares across the bosky plain, and as he journeyed by a corner near a barberry tree he heard a music piping so gaily, and began to overtake a boy dancing along ahead of him. But not *quite* a boy, for it was no taller than a goose and had no clothes on; its feet were goat's feet, and the legs were covered with fine white and foxy hair curled up to the hips. There, except for a coney's tail. it was the

same as a child, with smooth bare arms and body, a tiny face with taper chin and soft eyes, the head crowned with the same white and foxy hair as its thighs, but two horns were peeping from the hair like the knobs on mountain lambs, and they made you think of the new moon. So tiny, so jubilant! Could you but have seen it you would have rejoiced. The faun was so happy it could not walk or trot but must dance along, all the way to Sugarloaf Hill, playing an air on a pipe made of reeds.

The little faun became demure when Toby overtook it. It stopped piping and dancing. It put its hand up into Toby's and said shyly: 'Shall I come with you?'

'Yes,' Toby said, and they went along together for a little way before he asked:

'Where are we going?'

'To the races,' the faun said.

'How far is that?'

'As far as we want to go,' the faun replied.

'I know,' said Toby, 'but how far do we want to go?'

'Why,' answered the little faun, smiling up at him, 'as far as the races.'

'Yes, but how long will it take us?'

'It will take us all the time until we get there,' little goatfoot replied.

'How long will that be?'

'Well, it could only be as long as from now to then,' the faun pointed out.

'Yes, but how long *is* that?'

'Why, from here to the races.'

'But where *are* the races?' roared Toby.

'There aren't any races yet,' said faun.

'Then,' cried Toby, in high dudgeon, 'what the deuce are we going for?'

The little faun trembled in its hoofs as it said: 'There *will* be some races when we get there.'

Toby bent down and shook his finger at the faun.

'Little rogue! Do you know your conversation is making my blood begin to boil! Don't you understand plain language?'

'Let us go on,' the faun timidly begged. ' I do not care for boiling blood; and I fear it is getting late.'

Dancing on ahead it piped a tune that made Toby think of Bridget and become quite sad. Then the faun stopped and put one hand in Toby's, as if it wanted to be cared for.

'What are you thinking about?' the faun asked him.

Toby replied: 'I was thinking of home, and I wish I was there.'

'Where is your home?'

Toby told him all about it as they went along, of Bridget, of Pedgell, of the Forester, the owl, the fox, the salmon, Mr. Adhemar, the Klacken, the pirates, and Snooping Barnacle, and all to find some Pink Furniture!

'How stupid of you,' said the little faun, 'there is no such thing.'

'But I know there is,' cried Toby, ' I know Bridget has seen it, and she does not lie.'

'Yes,' sighed the faun, 'and it is most beautiful, I know.'

'There you go again!' cried Toby, 'first you say one thing, then another. What do you mean? Why don't you speak plain language?'

'I do not care for the plainness of plain language,' replied the faun. 'But what I mean is like this: At sunset the sky turns golden, but it is not really gold. Or the clouds turn pink, and the mountains are pink, but they are not really pink; it is the loving eye of the sun that makes them seem so. The sea looks blue, but it is not blue; it is the loving glance of the sky that makes it seem so. There is no Pink Furniture, yet to some loving eye it may well seem so. Therefore,' concluded the faun, 'there is no such thing, but it is very beautiful.'

Toby pondered deeply on these words and wondered if they could be true. Only Bridget had ever seen this Pink Furniture – so what did that mean? Stinker had said that he would find all about it in the *Open and Ask Me*, but Stinker had then said there was no such book. His aunt had seemed to know something of the mysterious matter, but she did not want him to know about it, just as Stinker had known and yet would not tell. Come

what might, he was going to find the kingdom of Patcat and seek there for the Book of Wisdom.

Little goatfoot danced along ahead playing sweetly on his pipe.

'Wait!' Toby called. 'Where is the country of Patcat?'

The faun waved his arms all round and answered, 'It is here.'

'Oh, that is lucky,' thought Toby, and he said to the faun:

'Do you know where the king's secret garden is?'

'Yes,' the faun replied, 'everybody knows that.'

'Where is it?'

'Nobody must ever tell,' said faun; 'you see it is a secret.'

'I never heard such rubbish as you do talk,' Toby said sourly; 'you drive me mad.'

'I expect,' the faun thoughtfully said, 'you went mad through living in Purganda.'

'What! You don't think I am mad, do you?' cried Toby.

The faun answered: 'No, only you said you were.'

Again it put its hand in Toby's and said softly: 'Do not be angry with me.'

'All right,' was Toby's answer, and they went on most kindly together, while animals and birds and such-like flocked by them, all making for the hill which had now drawn nigh. The grass was

alive with worms and snails all proceeding hot-foot to the races.

'Tell me,' at length began Toby, 'have you heard of the Book of Wisdom?'

'Yes, it is in the garden of the secret.'

'Have you ever seen it?'

'Nobody has seen it.'

'Do you know what it is like?'

'It is nothing,' the faun said mildly.

'There you go again!' growled Toby, commencing to be exasperated. 'First you say the book is there, it is guarded from every eye – and then you say it is nothing.'

'But it is quite clear. Do you not see,' the faun explained, 'that what no one ever sees, what never concerns them, *is* nothing?'

'I do not,' Toby grumbled. 'I shall never make heads or tails of such language. What language is it?'

'Please be happy with me,' said faun very sweetly. 'It is called Patcat patter.'

So on they went in friendship again, and Toby was rather happy, for he liked little faun. Yet he could not help worrying over what the faun had said about Pink Furniture and the Book of Wisdom. It made him doubtful. It was so mixed and muddled. All of it was true if you looked at it one way, all of it was silly if you looked at it another. Which was the right true way?

'Here we are,' cried the faun presently. 'This is Sugarloaf Hill.'

Up the hill they climbed. On top was a round shallow dell that had once been a dewpond, but was now dry, and green with cropped grass. Here the races were to be run, and a little course was marked out with tiny flags all round the bank of the dell. The winning-post was a tall red rose tree, and the starting-post a tall white one. The sloping sides were crowded with multitudes of creatures of the wild – moles, hares, badgers, plovers, larks, slugs, moths, beetles, and ladybirds – while the grandstand was packed with queer frogs and most attractive butterflies.

All over the ground were weasels with bags of money hung round them, doing arithmetic, and there was an artful old toad playing the three-card trick on the top of a mushroom.

'Come along, come along, find the queen, find the queen!' quacked the sly old toad, as he shuffled the three cards and spread them on top of the mushroom again. 'Come along, watch me, but say nothing. It's as easy as kiss-your-hand and as nice as me-in-the-hole. Find the queen!'

Toby searched in his pocket until he found his farthing, and this he staked on one of the cards. The old toad said nothing; he just opened his mouth, out darted his tongue, and the farthing disappeared.

'There was an artful old toad playing the three-card trick on the top of a mushroom.'

'Gone again!' croaked old toad. 'It's as easy as kiss-your-hand. Find the queen!'

Well, it was impossible to go on losing money like that, so the faun and Toby went weeping away just as the clerk of the course rang his bell. The clerk was a white owl with a spyglass; he was most strict, and stood on a post and stared through his spyglass all round the course as far as the white rose tree where the start took place. This race was for dragon-flies, of noted character and not less than six months' service with their colours. There were seventeen of them, ridden by grasshopper jockeys, and they hovered on a line until the starter, a black rook, gave them the Go. When he said 'Caw!' they were gone at such a rate that Toby's sight could not follow them, but the faun told him that the favourite dragon-fly had won. It was the lovely blue fly named Sarsaparilla, and everybody was glad except a few weasels who were taken with a sudden fit of the trembles.

Bright was the day and joyful was the time, although the noise, what with hurdy-gurdies and the weasels and a lot of magpies playing on banjoes, was uproarious. There were booths where spiders sold lace and told fortunes, and a stall piled with puffballs and nuts – Squirrel and Sneezum was the name over it. A great attraction was the wrestling match. It was between champion white slug and champion black slug. What a contest! Alone in the

arena, observed by myriads of onlookers, the two champions advanced, poked each other slothfully with their noses, and then lay side by side and fell fast asleep. But the umpire, a brisk young mole in a white waistcoat, jumped into the ring and smacked both their naked sides with a thistle. The white champion puffed himself up like lightning and glared at the black. The black returned his gaze with insult. And then! How those two dangerous beasts mouthed and writhed and puffed and shuddered and snarled and hugely heaved! For an infinite time it seemed they mooned and mangled each other until, exhausted in his hour of triumph, the white conqueror snored upon the bosom of his black adversary, and was awarded the cucumber prize.

Next came on the grand event of the day, a handicap for caterpillars, ridden by grasshopper jockeys, and when these noble creatures assembled at the starting-post, all cavorting in their impetuous way, it was very hard for the grasshoppers to soothe their agitation for them and keep them controlled.

'Caw!' cried the rook, and away went the whole seven, hooking themselves along, foaming at the mouth, panting madly, and swaying their heads from side to side like elephants' trunks. On and on and everlastingly on they sped until the winning-post was passed quite eagerly by a small black caterpillar with Arab blood in his veins, called Touch-me-not. He came in with such violent speed

that you could have heard a pin drop, and two more weasels died of heart failure. The prize was a pumpkin.

Finally there was the race for bumble-bees. But when the six bumbledorums got to the white rose bush at the starting-post, they all flung themselves upon the lovely roses and paid no attention whatever to the starter, so the race was declared void. But the wise old owl said he was not going to have the arrangements upset by a lot of hobbledehoys, and he ordered the six of them to engage in a tug of war.

'Fetch me,' he cried, 'a rope powerful and good!' A good powerful rope, made by the spiders, was fetched. The six bad bumbledorums took their stand at one end of the rope and waited. Who were their rivals? The clerk of the course rung his bell and at once six lusty young snails came shovelling along to the other end of the rope. Goodness! What a lovely sight when they took off their helmets and revealed themselves in all their shining simplicity! Without a word they took up the rope in their hands, while the bees took up their end of the rope and mumbled among themselves. The owl held up his spyglass for silence. Then shouted 'Pull!' At once the rope stretched taut, and the six bees began to buzz such a bombilation as was never known. Everybody's eardrums throbbed, tingled, rumbled, and split. Whoever heard them in the next county mistook it for thunder. At the same

time the bees snatched and hove and rocked and growled at the snails, thinking to frighten them and pull them over the mark in half a minute. But oh no! The six snails preserved an august calm, and with the rope held firmly in their little hands, just sat down and took no notice of the roaring raging bees. They twitched their horns slightly, looked calmly up into the bright blue sky, and curled their moustaches. Do what they would, the bumbledorums could not move them an inch, their own strength began to fail, and it would have gone hard with them had not one of the bumbledorums treacherously darted forward and stung every little snail, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, in the small of the back. Poor little fellows! At once they fell prone, and the outrageous bees then dragged them over the winning mark.

'Bring that bee to me!' roared the clerk of the course.

They brought that bee to the owl, and he ate him, sting and all, and then fined the five other bumbledorums five cartloads of the best honey. That was to teach them a lesson, but whether the owl got the honey is not known to this day.

As soon as all was over away flew the birds, great flocks in the sky, and down the hill went the four-footed creatures, the hares scudding down, the squirrels hopping down, the moles sliding down, and the hedgehogs rolling down, while if any tiny

insect or creeping thing wanted a lift on its way you may be sure some kind bird gave it a very good lift.

'Good-bye,' said little faun to Toby at the top of the hill.

'Don't go away!' Toby begged, but little goatfoot said good-bye again, though he stayed and smiled at Toby and did not offer to go.

'Now just you show me where the king of Patcat lives,' said Toby.

His friend pointed out the quarter where the king's castle lay. While Toby was staring intently in that direction little goatfoot once more put his hand in Toby's and pressed it, saying 'Good-bye, Toby.' The other was staring so hard to find the castle that he did not heed the faun.

'I can't see it,' exclaimed Toby, 'I can't see anything!'

He turned round to ask the goatfoot once more – but he was not there, nobody was there, nothing was there. All gone! Racecourse, booths, grandstand, birds, beasts, and flowers, all gone, and Toby stood alone on Sugarloaf Hill in the calm bright evening. Was it a trick being played on him? The dell was as smooth, its grass as fresh, its curves as tidy, as though for an age it had not been visited.

'Little rogue,' he called, 'where have you gone? Where are you, little rogue?'

He went on calling, calling, all over the hill, but there was no answer.

CHAPTER XX

PATCAT

IN the course of time, no matter how, Toby came to the castle of Patcat before the fall of night.

'Good-morrow,' said the monarch, 'I am quite well. You have come to fish for iron in the waters of anguish. I am obliged to you, but my daughter deals with that department. Meet the princess!'

The king was a king just like ordinary kings, but the princess was not. That is to say, she was not like ordinary princesses; yet the difference cannot be spoken of but only shown, and as the princess cannot be shown but only spoken of you must be content to believe that she was a most imperial pinnacle and pattern of pleasure, and nicely out-spoken.

'Good-morrow,' said she to Toby, 'I am quite well. You have come to pick stones from the tree of perdition. How most kind! Pray sit down and stay with us awhile. You won't like it, but you'll do, and I don't care for you but you will answer very well, so stay with us and we will show you the perils and dooms.'

So saying, she kissed him kindly, and asked if he was hungry.

Toby said he was slightly hungry.

'Oh, but I am rather hungry,' the princess said.

Toby then said he was quite hungry.

'Oh, but I am really very hungry,' the princess declared.

Then Toby said he was raging hungry.

'Oh, but I am mad with hunger,' she cried. 'I could swallow a whole prawn without turning a hair. But, you see, we never have meals until the day after to-morrow, and somehow the stupid thing has stopped there ever since I can remember.'

'What stupid thing?' inquired the boy.

'The day after to-morrow,' she replied. 'Of course it is quite overdue now, and I don't think we can depend upon it.'

'That's a pretty how-dye-do,' commented Toby.

'Yes,' she sighed, 'isn't it a peculiar state of affairs! What would you like to do instead of eating?'

'I think I should love to think about it,' answered Toby, for he had had nothing to eat since yesterday.

'I could say you a very nice piece of poetry about meals,' the princess thoughtfully said.

'I should like to hear that,' responded Toby eagerly.

'Well, you must not stare at me while I say it,' the princess pleaded.

'No,' said Toby.

'What is for breakfast, cried little Boy Blue.
School is shut up and there's nothing to do,

For teacher was drowned within sight of the land:
Oh, when I've had breakfast I shall feel grand.

Oh, what is for dinner? said Miriam Bath.
At half-past ten I'm as thin as a lath;
At twelve o'clock I am visibly thinner,
But you'll notice a change when I've had my dinner.

Pray what is for tea? Mrs. Robinson sighed.
I've had quite a blow – my husband has died,
And I'm very upset, I'm as bad as can be,
But I'll feel much better when I've had tea.'

Thoughtful silence pervaded the room for some moments after the princess had finished, then Toby said 'Yes, yes.' After he had said it twice more the princess inquired:

'Shall we play at noughts and crosses?'

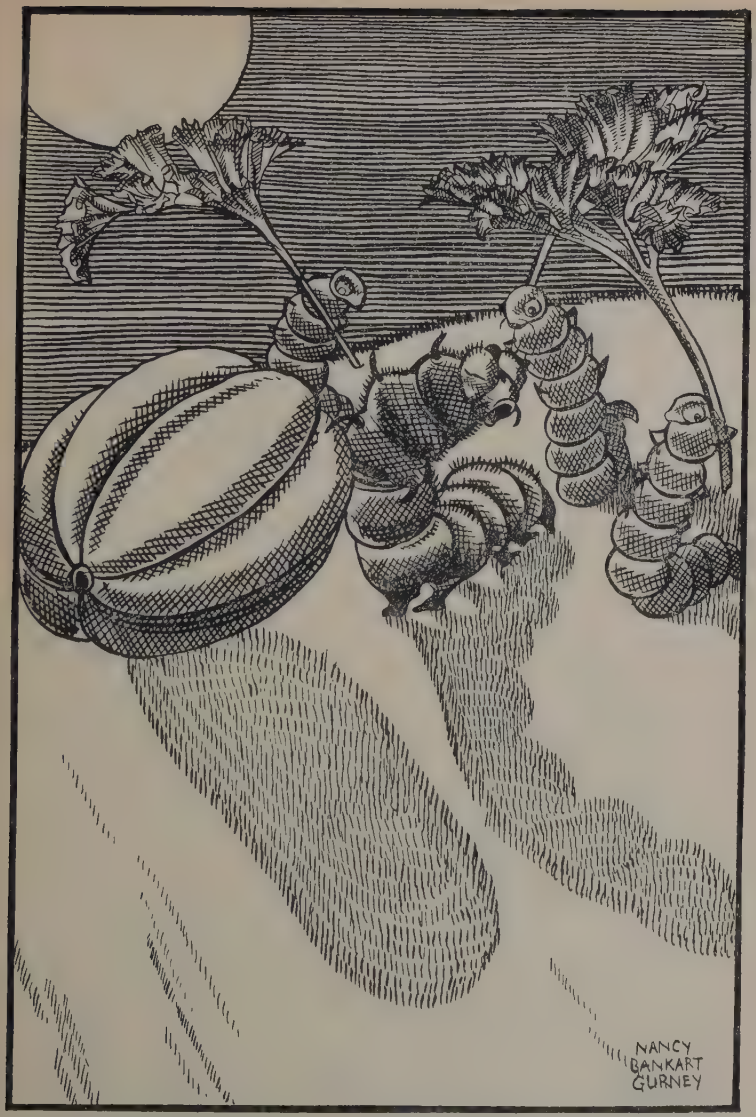
Toby did not mind, so they played at noughts and crosses until daylight waned in the sky, when the princess said he must be a good Toby and go early to bed.

'Early to bed and early to sleep,
Is false of the owl, is true of the sheep;
But obstinate creatures with obsolete views
Must sleep when they can and get up when they
choose.'

So she gave him a candle to light him to bed and took and locked him in a small room with a bed in

it. On looking out of the window Toby saw a garden in the moonlight, so close to him that he could step into it were he so minded; but he was not, because those trees moved and hissed and the stars were sharp as daggers. Somewhere beyond it, it could not be very far off now, lay the secret garden and the *Open and Ask Me*, but although he was so close to the thing he had sought so long, his mind was full of care, and his courage was low, for he knew nobody had ever returned alive from that quest. Wearily he undressed and retired to bed, but he could not sleep because of the hunger gnawing at his vitals, and he lay wide-eyed hour after hour. About the time of midnight he heard a commotion outside, so he rose up, opened the window, and peered out into the garden to discover the cause of this commotion. Judge of his surprise when he saw before him the young black caterpillar Touch-me-not, who had won the great race, going home tipsy, rolling his prize, the pumpkin, along, and singing a rowdy ballad at the top of his voice! Really, you could not even call it singing – it was hooting.

He was not alone. Several glow-worms walked by his side. Each of them carried a sprig of parsley, like a parasol, to ward off the glare of the moon. Now they stopped opposite Toby's window and indulged in a mingled chorus. There lay the great pumpkin on the grass, a lovely fruit, gleaming like



'The young black caterpillar . . . going home tipsy, rolling his prize, the pumpkin, along, and singing a rowdy ballad at the top of his voice.'

an ostrich egg, and while Touch-me-not sang he fondly smacked his prize.

'Hush!' called Toby. 'It is enough to wake the dead. How can you be so naughty?'

The caterpillar made a face and put out his tongue at Toby, but still he was a lovely creature. His furry coat was spangled with midnight dew, and the moon was shining into every drop to make a pearl of it. The glow-worms hid themselves under their parasols as though they were ashamed, but Touch-me-not broke into another song that made the welkin groan.

Then a window overhead was thrown open, and Toby heard the princess's voice:

'Who is that low fellow? Do you know you are on private property? Begone, or I will have you put in the assizes before you can say Casabianca.'

The princess had not finished speaking before the glow-worms cast their parsley parasols from them and vanished, while Touch-me-not himself sped into the uttermost limbo of darkness, leaving his prize behind him.

Quiet having been regained, the princess shut her window, but Toby Tottel continued to gaze, and with dismay, at the gleaming pumpkin left lonely and uncared for in the grass before him.

'I had better fetch it in,' he mused, 'or somebody may steal it. Or it might go bad in the night air. You never know what will happen until it happens.'

So he clambered out of the window and brought the pumpkin and the sprigs of parsley beside it into his bedroom. There he stroked the pumpkin admiringly. The skin was cool as snow and the aroma fascinating.

'It is a lovely gourd,' sighed Toby Tottel. 'Oh, dear, it is a fine pumpkin. I wonder how many seeds there are in a pumpkin like this? About forty score, I should think. Perhaps more. I should very much like to know, but it is hard to tell from the outside.'

He got a pocket-knife from his coat, and placed the pumpkin on his knees. Then cutting a nice wedge right out of the pumpkin, he counted on the slice six-and-sixty seeds. So then he ate the slice. There were more and more seeds on every slice he cut. At last the pumpkin was all gone except the seeds. And they were just exactly as many as Toby thought they would be – forty score. So then he ate the parsley, and after that he retired to bed and slept most gratefully.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GIANT

FRESH as a lark, Toby rose in the morning and said good-bye to the princess. He did not ask her to marry him, but she cared nothing for that, he being only a boy; even if he had been grown up he would soon die and she would see him no more. She walked with him as far as the entrance to the Garden of the Secret, opened a black door, and pushed him in.

'I hope you will find everything you require,' she fondly said, and Toby passed on as the door clacked heavily behind him.

Strange and shadowy was that garden, wherein he moved without sound. So very silent. No grass grew, the earth was white with the powder of innumerable shells; black rose the trees, their trunks soft and pliant as rubber, their foliage floating and curling in the air without a sigh, like the sea-fungus trailing in a tide. Toby avoided the touch of these, for he feared they would cling to him and bind his body in their cruel thongs until he was done for. Plodding over this white earth he came at last to a small river, where beside him stood a huge barn. On the door of the barn a notice was pinned.

BOY WANTED

He heard a roaring voice singing: *With my Pom-ba-lom-ba-de-pom-day!* but he banged upon the door. It flew open and a man came out, a man so vast that you could not see all of him at once. First you saw his two slippers, roomy as boats, then his massy knees like the boles of a tree. Higher and higher the eye travelled, giddily upwards, from waist to chin, and then came his face hung up aloft as large as any cartwheel. All he wore was a short grey smock with a belt of rope.

Putting his hands on his knees, the giant bent down to laugh at tiny Toby, who trembled because he could see his teeth were made of iron.

'All you have to do,' said the giant, 'is to provide me a good soup supper of ants' bones. I like a lot, but no boy ever made enough for me yet, so I have had to eat them as well. Are you philosophic?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Are you reckless?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Are you cheap?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Good, my infant! I pay you a pint of peas a day.'

The giant took Toby into the barn and said: 'There is my soup basin.'

It stood upon the table, a basin like a washtub, with a quart spoon beside it. The giant took him outside again. 'There are the ants' bones.'

Toby saw that the earth he had mistaken for the powder of shells was really formed of ants' bones. It looked a very simple job. Here he would wait on this giant for a day or two, until he found out where the temple was. Being only a boy, the giant would not suspect him.

'Here is my water,' continued the huge fellow, leading the way to the river.

'It is a lovely clear water,' Toby observed.

'It is rather heavy, my infant.'

'Yes,' agreed Toby, 'but it flows lightly and smoothly.'

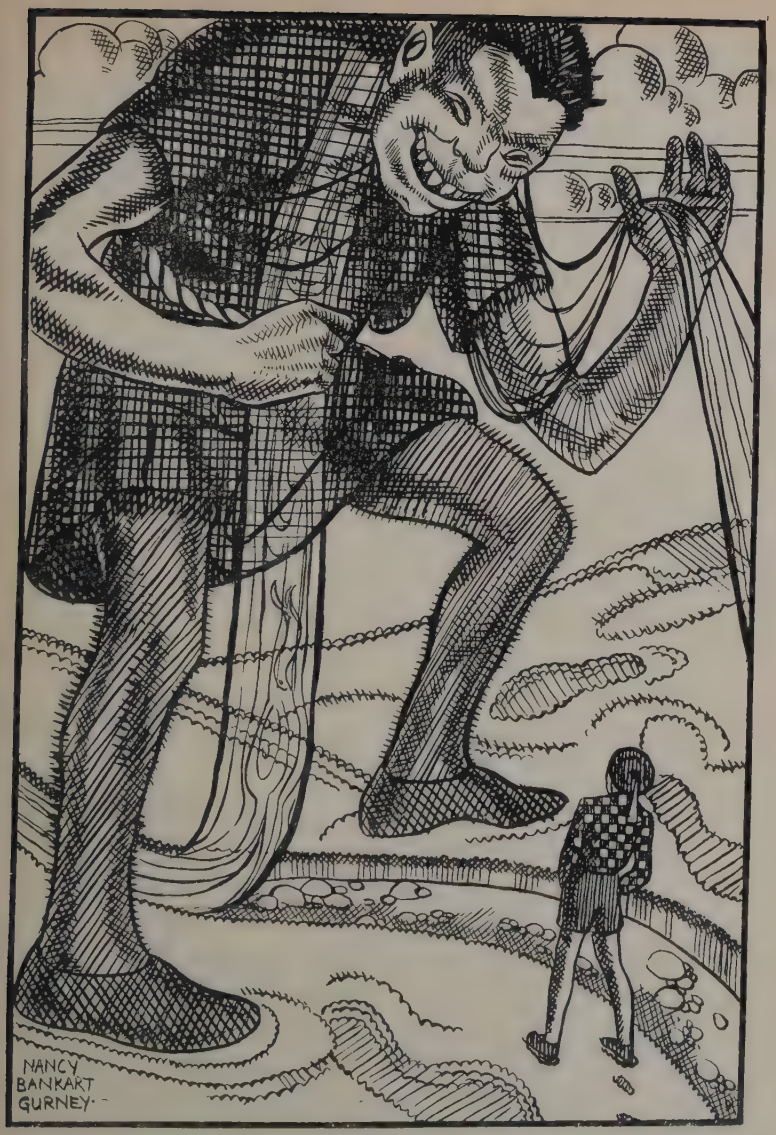
'I tell you it is heavy,' the giant persisted; 'I can scarcely lift it.'

Straddling his vast legs across the river from bank to bank, he plunged his arms into the water and lifted the whole river upon his shoulders and hung it round his neck like a scarf of liquid silk. The poor frightened fishes, not knowing what to do or where else to go, just slipped into the pockets of his smock for safety.

'Not for long do I wear it so,' cried the giant, 'because it might give me rheumatics.' And he threw the river back into its channel again, where it went on flowing as before. Then he emptied all the fish out of his pockets into the river again.

'I do not care for fish,' he said. 'I love soup; I eat that and it feeds my bones.'

So then the giant went off about his business and



'Lifted the whole river upon his shoulders and hung it round his neck like a scarf of liquid silk.'

left Toby to prepare the soup for his supper. It took twenty-four shovelfuls of the ants' bones, but Toby worked hard and made a lot of nice silky soup. After that he cunningly bored a number of small holes in the quart spoon.

Home came the giant, singing: *Pom-ba-lom-ba-de-pom-day!* 'Hast got supper ready, my infant?'

Down he sat and began to lap up spoonfuls of soup with much velocity, but though he dipped and dipped and dipped, half of the soup slipped through the holes in the spoon back into the basin again. The giant did not notice this, or observe the holes, so there was plenty of soup in the basin for a long time, and he was most affable. Such a thing had never happened before! He declared he had had a glorious supper.

'Here is your pay, my bonny one!' And he gave Toby a bag of hard peas. 'Eat them, and they will feed your bones.'

Toby only ate a few of them because he had been swallowing quite a lot of soup on the sly. So then they sat beside the fire, and the giant told Toby about his past life and some of his strange habits and his novel mode of marriage.

'A young man says to his sweetheart: "My love, I am so fond of you I could eat you." But he never does! Now all the giants in our family are so fond of their wives that they *do* eat them. When I courted my young woman her father asked me if I loved

her. "Love her! I said, why I could eat her!" "Then you shall," says he, and so we were soon married.'

The giant sighed as if he were full of sombre thoughts.

'Was it a nice marriage?' inquired Toby.

'Oh, fairish,' replied his master. 'I made ham of her, though I do not care for ham, and I said, "Kiss me quick." So she did, and in two bits she was gone. A nice creature. Had very good taste.'

The giant took off his slippers, and lit his pipe for a smoke.

'You will have to sleep in one of these slippers,' he said to Toby. 'It will be snug and comfortable. Now,' he yawned, stretching back in his big arm-chair, 'I should like you to tell me a nice dry story to send me off to sleep. Lately I sleep not well.'

Toby was sorry to say that he could not oblige with a single story.

'Oh dear, oh dear,' grumbled the giant, 'what are the boys all coming to? And I suppose you can't read?'

'Yes, I can read,' Toby answered.

'Can you? Can you read from print?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Good!' cried the giant, pulling a book from a shelf. Read then to me a nice dry story out of that book. It is good strong print, but I cannot read it for myself.'

So Toby opened the book, and there was this story called *The Bird-cage*, which he read to the giant.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BIRD-CAGE

ONE night as Shooby the tailor was wandering home rather tipsy from the tavern, he heard bells in the church steeple clash out an alarm of fire, and looking up into the region of the sky he saw the glow of a great flame in the neighbourhood. So Shooby says:

'It is a cold night, I will go to this fire and have me a warm.'

Off ran Shooby, and in a short time he came to the fire which was burning up a row of houses and shops; everything was perishing from door-sill to chimney. Poor people were running out of the burning buildings with brooms and pictures and pillows in their arms, and then running back again for looking-glasses, pots, and door-mats. Noises of shouting and screaming rose continuously, and the fire roared like tigers in their wrath, but Shooby stood very affable before it all, rubbing his fat little paunch and murmuring:

'It is a great comfort to me on this cold night, to be sure, on this cold night it is a great comfort to me, and it is a cold night indeed and it is a great comfort to a poor man.'

All of a sudden a man rushed out of a burning house and thrust something into Shooby's hand, shouting: 'Hold this!' Then he ran off again. Shooby looked, and to be sure it was a bird-cage the man had given to him, a cage with a yellow bird in it.

'Well, my fine fellow,' says Shooby to the little bird, 'I shall be glad of your company, seeing it is a cold night, and we can take our comforts together.'

The bird took no notice of the tailor, but shut its eyes while Shooby was speaking and opened them again when he had finished. After a while Shooby's arm began to ache with holding up the cage and watching and waiting for the man who was gone so long in the burning house, so he stood the cage down in the road between his legs, and looked all about him to see whatever could have become of this man. But he could not see a bone or a stitch of him anywhere, and at last Shooby staggered up to some people and asked of them:

'Is this your bird-cage?'

'No,' they said.

'Do you know where it belongs?' asked Shooby.

'No,' they said.

'Well, then,' said he, 'would you like to buy this nice fine bird of me?'

Again they said 'No.'

Shooby wandered up and down, inquiring for that bird's master, but nobody would own to it.

'Is this your bird?' Shooby asked everybody. 'Or do you know whose bird it is? Or would you like to buy this fine bird and cage?' But all turned from him, and would have nothing to do with the bird or the cage or Shooby.

'Well,' thought Shooby, 'it is a cold night, and I will get me home, but I will not be anchored to this bird in a cage any longer. So there you are, my fine little fellow.'

Thinking thus, he stood the cage in the middle of the street where he hoped it might be found by its owner, and walked off. But he had not gone many steps when a large man ran after him with the cage and put in into Shooby's hands again.

'You have forgotten this, master,' said he.

'It is not my bird at all,' replied Shooby.

'But I saw you put it down in the road,' the man retorted.

'I tell you,' cried Shooby, 'it does not belong to me.'

'Ah, go on with you,' said the man, 'I saw you. Take your cage and your bird; don't leave the poor creature to perish on this cold night.'

'Well, I tell you then,' said Shooby angrily, 'I will wring its neck.'

'If you do that,' the man sternly threatened, 'I will wring your own the next minute.'

At that moment the bird in the cage burst into a fierce little song, as loud as a piccolo.

'Ho, ho,' Shooby said. 'Is that you, my dashing fellow? Very well, come along.'

Picking up the cage again he rambled away with it until he came to a nice dark garden with a low hedge, and there he leaned over the hedge and flung the cage among the bushes. No sooner had he done so than the bird again burst into a fierce song, as loud as a piccolo. Shooby took to his heels, but he had only gone a street and a half when he saw a great black hound of a dog trotting after him, carrying the bird-cage by the ring in its mouth. The dog came up to Shooby and stood the cage at his feet and looked at him and growled until the tailor took it up and marched on with it.

'This is a shocking thing,' exclaimed Shooby, 'at my time of life.'

Whenever he glanced behind he could see the great dog still following him, but Shooby was not fond of birds, and he swore he would get rid of that one in the cage, dog or no dog; so when he came to the middle of a bridge crossing the river, he cast the bird-cage over into the water, and ran and ran down crooked alleys and round queer corners until he came breathless to the door of his own little house.

'Oh, what is this I see!'

There upon the doorsill stood the cage awaitng him, and Shooby could see by the moonlight the wet footmarks of a dog all along the pavement.

Shooby scratched his tipsy noddle and muttered:

'Well, if there is nothing else to be done with you, I must do it.'

So he took the cage into his own house and hung it on a hook and went to bed.

The next morning, as Shooby was sitting cross-legged on his table stitching away at a handsome coat, a customer came in, a rich prince – but a blackamoor. As the black man entered, the bird in the cage began to pipe a soft, sweet melody.

'That is a fine bird you have there, my friend,' said the black person.

'Ay,' returned Shooby stitching away.

'A nice little piper,' continued the prince, strumming the cage bars with his finger-tips and making noises with his mouth; 'will you sell it?'

'No,' said Shooby coolly, continuing to stitch.

'I will pay you a good sum for it,' the black man promised.

'Impossible, your greatness,' replied the tailor. 'That bird was given me as a token of love by the Princess Ibrahin of Perukimbozado. I am an honest snip and a loyal man. I will never part with it. Only death could separate me from that fowl.'

'I will give you,' the blackamoor persisted, 'two silver shillings for the thing.'

'Sold!' cried Shooby. The blackamoor paid the money on the spot, and carried the bird away.

Now this blackamoor was courting a sweet lady –

'"I will pay you a good sum for it," the black man promised.'

Lavinia was her name – who had no love for him. Many handsome presents he brought to her or sent to her, but this made no difference, she refused them all because her pure heart disliked him. But this blackamoor languished for the love of ladies, any lady's love, and he became enraged and swore to himself and his bad companions that Lavinia should become his wife. He gave her a wonderful mirror framed in jade, but she would not even look into it; the rare gems he sent she returned to him, and all his offerings made no impression on the gentle girl until one day he brought her this yellow bird in the cage. When the bird saw the beautiful lady it broke into a tender, joyous melody, so sweet that Lavinia could not bring herself to refuse the gift, and so she thanked the blackamoor and he left the bird in her care. Every day thereafter he visited her to inquire how the bird throve, and this lady loved the bird so much that she could not but be gracious to the blackamoor for bringing her such pleasure. Yet she gave him no love, and would not permit him to kiss her hand.

Now at first the bird was shy, but he sang sweetly whenever Lavinia strummed on the bars of the cage. Soon she became aware that it was no ordinary bird, that it was indeed not a bird at all, but a creature with a sad history, and by and by it confided its misfortunes to her.

Said the bird: 'Once I was a mortal like you,

living in my father's palace, a happy prince, until a sorcerer's daughter desired me to wed with her. This I would not do, and in revenge she caused her father to change me into a bird as you see me now, and confined me in this cage. All this was years ago, and since then I have been thrown from hand to hand, and I am like to remain a prisoner thus until the end of time.'

The lady Lavinia wept to hear so sad a story.

'Is there no way of freeing you from this enchantment?' she inquired.

And the bird said: 'The way is difficult, unless another will take my place.'

'Tell me,' said she.

'First,' he replied, 'you must build a cage of gold so large that it will hold a man.'

'I will do that,' cried Lavinia.

'Then you must open the door of this my little cage and release me. At once I shall regain my human form, but alas, I shall be free for one hour only, and then I must return into my cage or my body will dissolve into water. But being no longer a bird it would be impossible for me to return into the small cage, so cunning was that enchanter, hence you must have the new cage big enough to hold a man. And this must be done for three days, each day I must be released for one hour. Should I fail to re-enter on the second day my body would consume in fire, and if I failed on the third day I

should crumble into ashes. Will you do this for me?'

'Yes,' Lavinia said, 'I will do this.'

So she caused a great cage of gold to be made, and it was carried into her bower where it stood by the door of glass that opened into her garden. And she was about to release the bird from its small cage when a startling summons sounded upon her door. It was the blackamoor come to pay her a visit, and he asked her:

'What is this beautiful cage for?'

And she answered: 'It is a fancy I have to keep a golden bird, but I do not know whether I shall ever find such a one.'

'Marry me,' the blackamoor said, 'and I will find the golden bird.'

'I must find him within three days, or not at all,' replied Lavinia.

'Give me your promise,' said he, 'and I will find you fifty golden birds.'

'Nay,' she answered, 'I will give you no promise, but in three days I will give you an answer.'

With that he had to be content and so departed. Then Lavinia flew to release the enchanted bird.

'No, no,' the bird cried, 'you have not yet prepared the new cage. Gather fresh food for me and place it there.'

So Lavinia ran into her garden and brought some armfuls of chickweed and groundsel to thrust into

the golden cage, and from her kitchen she brought a cube of sugar so large that she could scarce lift it. This she fixed between the golden bars. Then an urn of water and a sack of seeds were put into the cage.

'Now,' said the bird, 'on the first day I must leave my cage only at dawn.'

'That will be to-morrow,' sighed the lady.

'Yes,' replied the bird. 'And on the second day it must be at midnight, and on the third day at noon.'

'I wonder what will happen,' mused Lavinia.

At night she went early to her bed, but for a long time anxiety kept her from sleeping.

When at last she closed her tired eyes she did not open them again until it was broad day. She wept, and ran trembling downstairs to the bird in its cage. When she spoke to it and begged forgiveness it did not answer her, but only piped the tender melody she knew so well. All the livelong day she neither ate nor smiled, and when night came she vowed that nothing should prevent her rising with the dawn to release the bird.

And this time all turned out well. She rose, and at the first whistle of the thrushes in the laurels she stood an hourglass upside down upon the chimney-piece and opened the door of the little cage. The yellow bird at once hopped down from its perch and stood timidly upon its threshold, peering

timidly from left to right. Then it fluttered down to Lavinia's feet, and suddenly grew into something that resembled a young man, but not wholly. For its head was still the head of a bird, and, although he had hands and feet, the feet were still the claws of a bird, and all his clothes were but feathers.

Lavinia at first was so terrified by its strange appearance that she trembled and could not speak, but soon she felt only pity and love for the poor creature, and so, to pass the hour away, she sat down with it, and they played a game of checkers, while the birds sang in the garden and the sun warmed the walls. As soon as the sand in the hour-glass neared its last grains, Lavinia unlocked the new golden cage.

'Return now,' said she, 'lest you dissolve into water.'

The strange figure entered its new cage, and although its likeness did not change any more, it still behaved as a bird, pecking at the sugar and the groundsel, and sipping daintily from the urn of water. Then it hopped upon the perch and sang of joy, while Lavinia broke her fast. When this was over, the great bird put its head under its wing and went to sleep, so Lavinia returned to her room, and fell into a happy slumber.

Throughout the long day she went eagerly about her business, but towards midnight, when she was

to release the half-bird again, her qualms returned, for its figure was so strange, the hour so late, and the silence filled her with tremors. Nevertheless, at the stroke of midnight, she upturned the hour-glass and unclosed the cage. This time the half-bird made no pause but stepped lightly into the room, and before Lavinia's eyes the bird's head changed into the features of a comely youth, and its feet were no longer claws, but were shod with shoes of fine leather. All that remained of the bird were the feathers.

The prince unlatched the glass door and they walked in the moonlight, where the white moths were silently flitting and the air was sweet with flowery odours. For long they walked in the trim alleys of her garden, and once she plucked for him a peach from the wall, but he dared not eat of it. Then upon a lawn they danced together, and he danced so daintily, so wooingly, that she almost forgot time. But then she cried:

'Return now, lest you consume in fire.' And he only scrambled back into the cage as the last grain tumbled from the hourglass. Again she locked him in and left him, but when she went to her bed she dreamed of him.

All the next morn she was distraught with waiting for the tardy noon, for then he would be freed from the evil charm and she could be his bride. Punctually at the hour she set the hourglass and

unlocked the cage. The prince came out. Except for a ring of feathers round his neck he was this time in the full habit of a prince, with fine clothes, and on his back bore a crossbow and a quiver of arrows. At once he unbuckled the bow and laid it with the arrows upon the table, but as he did this, there came a loud summons at the door. The prince darted away into the garden. No other eye must witness his transformation, or all would be lost again, so he fled while Lavinia turned to greet her visitor. It was the blackamoor come to claim her promise of three days ago. In one hand he offered her a bouquet of flowers, in the other a ring of betrothal. Lavinia closed her eyes, turned her face from him, and waved her lilywhite hand in refusal. He begged, he stormed, he cast the flowers against the wall, the ring upon the floor, and reproached her bitterly. He caught up the crossbow that still lay upon the table.

'Whose bow is this?' he demanded in his jealous rage. 'Where is that man? He is here! I will shoot him with his own bow as dead as a dustman's anchor.'

Into the garden he rushes, but although he ranged and roared he could not find the prince, who had hidden from view behind some honey hives. Back to the room he came, where Lavinia stood trembling; for the sand was falling through the glass, and the prince could not return. Round and

'The half-bird made no pause, but stepped lightly into the room.'

about the blackamoor searched, and then he darted upstairs to see what might be there.

Ah, then! Lavinia flew to the garden: 'Return, O return! lest you crumble into ashes.'

At once the prince came flying and leaped into the cage just as the last grain fell. The feathers dropped from his neck there, and he was wholly free.

But what is this! Downstairs came the blackamoor roaring into the bower again.

'The cage! the cage! What do you keep in that cage?' Before the prince in the cage could draw a dagger to defend himself the blackamoor bearing the crossbow sprang into it after him . . . but . . . At once, by some mischance of the dreadful magic, he himself was changed into a bird, his roar became a croak, and he hopped upon the perch and flapped his wings in the very image of a crow. The prince jumped out of the cage, and Lavinia slammed the door upon the blackamoor crow, and locked him in with her golden key.

The prince had dark eyes and hair of gold. There and then he and Lavinia were betrothed, and soon afterwards they were married. For many a day they fed the black crow in the golden cage, they did not know what else to do about it, but at last they sold the crow to a travelling man, who showed it all over the country as a very strange bird. Which indeed he was.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TEMPLE

WHEN Toby finished reading, the giant was snoring peacefully, having gone to sleep when Shooby sold the bird-cage to the blackamoor, so Toby closed the book, climbed into the giant's left slipper, and making a pillow of the bag of peas quickly followed the example of his master.

Thus for seven days did Toby Tottel live in the Garden of the Secret. By then he had found out the path to the temple. It was not far off, but it took a long time to reach the temple because he had to go by a path that wound about in mazes and loops that did not seem to begin anywhere and never came to an end, like patterns on wallpaper. And this path had a yew edge on either side, as high as the giant's shoulder; the giant could just peep over them, but for small Toby the hedge towered up like two black cliffs, making a gloom so deep that he felt as bad as a blind dormouse in a thicket of larch.

But bold hearts find the coronets, and Toby laid his plans. On the seventh morning he arose early and emptied nearly all the peas he had into the giant's slippers. There was just one little bagful left which he hid in a corner. Then, with lodestone in pocket, he crept out and hied full pelt for the path to the temple. But at the very moment Toby set foot within the maze the giant awoke and knew

that somebody was deceiving him. Must be Toby. With a howl of rage the giant slipped his slippers on and rushed in pursuit. In three leaps he gained the maze path where Toby was speeding like a hare, but in two more strides the giant had to stop and empty his slippers because the peas which Toby had dropped in them were causing him such anguish. While he did this he put his long hairy arm over the hedge and scratched with his fingers along the path, trying in vain to catch Toby so, for all that time Toby was racing down an avenue on the other side. But in a moment or two the giant was once more leaping after him.

'Stop, spawn of a newt! Wah!'

In one stride he went farther than Toby went in a hundred; he had the light above, while Toby had only the darkness beneath and was not sure of his way, therefore he was soon overtaking the boy. Billigo, billigo, billigo, billigo, went Toby's feet, while the giant followed on with plunk, plunk, plunk.

'Ha, thou tiger! I, the giant of Patcat, am after thee!'

At any moment Toby expected the great moon of his face to peer round a dark corner at him, or one of his slippers to crush him like an egg, or his finger and thumb to pinch him up like a flea. All at once Toby remembered the lodestone in his pocket and he gasped out the incantation:

'*Lodestone, born of rock and fire,*
Render me my true desire.
Out with his wisdom tooth.'

Now the lodestone was a marvellous thing, but it was rather dangerous if carelessly used. The giant's wisdom tooth was big as a teacup; it was made of iron, so when the tooth hit Toby in his pocket it knocked him down like a ninepin, and for a moment quite hurt him. However, on hearing the giant stop and scream: 'My tooth! O my wise tooth!' Toby picked himself up and limped gaily on, and soon he was racing splendidly again, billigo, billigo, billigo. But the giant was coming again, plunk, plunk, plunk, and this time Toby threw the lodestone ahead and said:

'Lodestone, born of rock and fire,
Render me my true desire.
Out with his fang tooth.'

Before the lodestone had stopped rolling there was the giant's tooth swooping down on it like a hawk at a bird, and again the giant stopped and screamed: 'My tooth! O my fang tooth!' Toby only stopped to regain his lodestone, and fled on. The giant roared: 'By the flame of a frog I will flatten thee! Halt! thou scum of gnat's liver!'

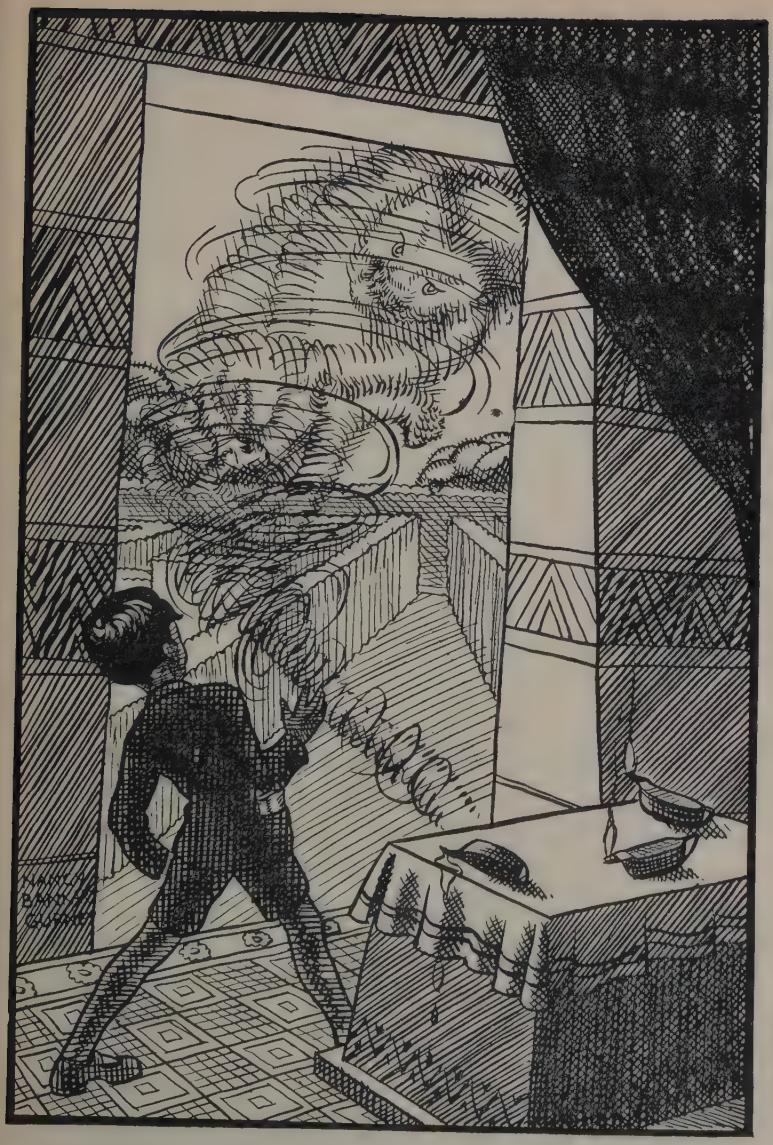
But Toby declined to take any notice of that because he had now come to the last piece of the path. It was straight, and away at the end of it he could see the red temple and between its red pillars the three lamps gleaming. With a grand spurt he reached the temple steps, dropped his lodestone there, and cried:

'Now out with his eye-tooth.'

A frantic wail rose from the maze: 'My tooth! O my eye-tooth!' as Toby breathlessly entered the temple. It was divinely scented. There on the stone table were the three lamps burning, set in a triangle. Between them lay the book, a small book curled and shrivelled. For a moment he was afraid to touch it, but then he thrust it into his pocket and stared at the three lamps. On one of them a name was engraved, *King of Patcat*; on another, *Princess of Patcat*; while *Giant of Patcat* was written on the third.

Suddenly Toby heard the plunk, plunk of the giant quite close, and he turned swiftly. As he did so the cuff of his coat caught the giant's lamp and overturned it and its flame was quenched. At once the advancing giant, holding both hands to his painful jaws, was enveloped in a thin blue fire. Then followed a quiet puff, and the giant dissolved, was lost, was gone, there was nothing left of him but a cloud of ochreous smoke rising over the Garden of the Secret.

With terror shaking him in every limb the boy watched the smoke roll and hover. On and on across the quiet skies swam the giant cloud, twirling and changing in fantastic shapes, like a sprawling bear or the map of Africa, and then at last it turned round the corner of the world and went sailing away to the isles of the blest.



'The giant dissolved, was lost, was gone; there was nothing left of him but a cloud of odorous smoke rising over the Garden of the Secret.'

CHAPTER XXIV

THE OPEN AND ASK ME

TOBY realised that by the merest chance, that careless brush of his sleeve, he had found out the secret of the garden. The life of those three, the giant, the king, the princess, were blended with the flame of those lamps burning their everlasting oil. He had only to put out the other two, and the king would die, the princess would die. That would be bitter sin. He sat down upon the steps of the temple and pulled the Book from his pocket. So small and so shrivelled, how could a book like that contain the wisdom of the world! Open it!

There were only a few pages and all of them were vacant, empty; not a sign of print or pen on any leaf. This was not the book, it could not be; a child's new copy-book was not more clean and bare. Had he been fooled? Misled? Was the profit of all his toil and danger just this nothing? A dozen times he opened and shut the book, thumbed it to and fro, shook the covers, held up each page to the light, but all was as blank as the back of a tombstone. In a rage he slammed the book down on the step between his feet. It fell open, and the silly blank pages seemed to mock him. His tears fell, and he

covered his eyes with his hands. After a minute or two he dried his eyes and murmured:

'What am I to do now?'

At once, upon the blank page before him, appeared the words:

I AM OPEN:
ASK ME.

With a shout of joy he snatched up the book as those words faded out again. Every page was as blank as before, but he held it in his hands and whispered:

'Tell me what I am to do?'

Words again swam on to the page and he read clearly:

'*Time flies in the Garden of the Secret. Each day counts as a mortal year. Begone.*'

Toby sprang to his feet. 'It means to say I must get out of the garden at once. Only seven days I have stayed here, and yet seven years of my life have sped by!'

Clasping the book to his bosom he began to run off down the maze path once more, retracing his steps, for he knew no other way to escape from the garden. But he had not gone twenty paces before he halted, turned, and walked back slowly. There was something he ought to do. He put the *Open and Ask Me* in his pocket, grasped the lodestone,

and stepped quietly into the temple. There, with a beating heart, he picked up the giant's lamp and tried to relight it at the king's lamp. It would not light. Then at the princess's lamp. It would not light. He put the lamp into its place and walked off into the maze once more, and after a time reached the giant's barn. There he secured the bag of peas he had hidden, and then hurried on until he came to the black door. Soon he was in the castle garden, and there at her window sat the princess, singing the *Tilly-Vally Song* out of a book before her:

'Namby Pamby woos politely,
Hugger Mugger stuns me;
Helter Skelter buys me plums,
But Willy Nilly shuns me.

I lost my heart with bag and baggage,
Tittle Tattle found it,
Nosey Parker spruced it up,
And Topsy Turvy crowned it.

Time and Tide wait no one's pleasure:
Could my love entreat thee,
Willy Nilly I would run
Pit-a-pat to greet thee.'

When she saw Toby she stared at him as if she did not know him, and called out:

'How dare you, bad man! Do you know you are on private property? Be off, at once!'

Nothing loath, Toby sauntered past the castle, and was soon on the high road in the land of the living once more, where a day was but a day and a year was as full of them as his bag was of peas.

After a mile or two, being hungry, he sat down on a grassy bank and took out the pea-bag to eat a handful, but when he unclosed the neck of the bag a brightness blazed up at him. For there were no peas there, not a pea! There were gems there, the bag was full of jewels, and he emptied them all out on to his pocket-handkerchief. Blue jewels, green ones, red gems, yellow ones, light or dark, but all lustrous with their tiny fires – zircon, jacinth, topaz, opal, diamond, ruby, beryl, all the riches of the world lying there between his knees – and he as hungry as a hunter. He scrambled them all up into his bag again, and hid them in his bosom.

There was the book, the *Open and Ask Me*. He opened that. The pages were blank as before, but he asked:

'Where is Pink Furniture?'

No answer appeared, not a sign of any word; nothing came. Again he questioned it:

'What must I do?'

At once a word swam on to the page, but only one:

Return.

He asked: 'How shall I return?' But to that the book gave no answer. Then he understood. Ah, he

thought, the book will always tell me what to do, but never how to do it! What did the book mean now? Was there no such thing as Pink Furniture? Was it true what the faun had said about it?

'Ah, little rogue,' sighed Toby, 'where are you now, so wise and kind?'

Scarcely had he murmured these words when the sound of piping stole into the air and dancing towards him came the faun. Toby sprang up and ran to meet him, crying:

'Little rogue, my little rogue!'

What joy to meet again! How happy they were! What shall we do?

'Oh!' cried Toby, 'I am hungry. I am twice as rich as a king, but I am famished.'

The faun gave its gentle smile: 'Give me your bag, Toby.'

Toby handed him the bag of jewels, and the goatfoot searched in it and singled out a bright yellow one.

'This will do,' he said, giving back the bag.

On they went together until they reached a sandy pit. There the faun made up a heap of pink sand and buried the yellow jewel in it. Both of them sat down beside the cone of sand and watched it. By and by a tiny shoot of green appeared on its top, and grew up and on. Marvel of marvels! It rose rapidly before their eyes into a tall thin stem as high as a man, and then the top of it broke into

boughs that sent forth flowers of thin leaves. Ever-changing the tree flourished. Birds came and nested in the branches. The flowers faded, but the bud in each heart grew on, swelling into fruit of peaches that ripened before their eyes.

Toby gathered handfuls of fine peaches. Then he reached up into the nests and took the eggs – and, do you know, the eggs were full of cream!

Down they sat and ate together, the faun and Toby, and says the faun to him:

'You have changed since I saw you many years ago. So much, Toby. I hardly knew you by sight, I only knew you by fondness.'

'What!' cried Toby, clapping his hands first against his head and then against his ribs. 'Is it true, then? Does every day in that garden really count as a year?'

'Yes, indeed,' said little goatfoot.

'O me! And am I a man now?' Toby asked. 'I shall never know how old I am. Perhaps I shall be dead before I know anything except this everlasting bother.'

'But Toby,' the faun gently said, 'nothing lasts for ever. Troubles have their day and even truths must change. Some last a lifetime, others are brief as a kiss.'

'That is all very well for you,' said Toby, 'but I don't know how old I am. You do. How old are you?'

'I am only about four hundred and ninety,' replied the faun.

'There you are,' said Toby. 'But I don't know *how* old I am now.'

'It is not much of an age,' goatfoot explained. 'I am young yet. You see, in my life, every year counts but as one day.'

Toby sighed and said: 'In mine it has been just the opposite. I lost years when I was with that owl and fox and salmon, and now I've lost seven more. I don't know how old I am, and Bridget will have forgotten me, and if she has not forgotten she would not know me now, and if she knows me now she will not like me, and if she likes me she will not tell me so – she is proud. And my aunt won't know me, nor Janey-Loo.'

At that moment one of the birds was piping in the tree among the peaches, and he began to pipe this – at least, if he did not really, it sounded very much like it:

'Tir-a-loo, tir-a-loo,
Sing, sing, no fear;
Toby, Toby, Toby,
Come along, my dear.

Quick, quick, tir-a-loo,
Twitter up, no tear;
Toby, Toby, Toby,
Heave ahead, my dear.

Cock-a-doodle-doo;
O my chanticleer!
You are nearly one-and-twenty,
Tir-a-loo, my dear.'

When the bird ceased piping it flew away, and as Toby sat there looking up into the fair tree, its leaves began to fade and curl, changing from green to brown, and then to fall. The hanging peaches fell, the bare branches shrunk and shortened, the tree declined and folded itself up, sinking downwards. In a few moments it was but a stake, then a twig, then a shoot, then a cap of seed, then all was gone and only the heap of sand remained, with the dead leaves lying by and a few shrivelled peaches. Saddest of all, the faun was gone, gone without a sound. Toby picked up his bag of jewels and went on to find the harbour of Patcat.

CHAPTER XXV

THE JEWELS

IN the course of the day he arrived on the shore of an almost landlocked bay. Across the water there were high cliffs as white as milk, but on the side where Toby came it was flat with the sea rippling almost to the margin of the grass. Save for the seabirds' cries there was nothing to invite him here but three tall pine trees growing on a bank. He had come as far in this direction as he could go. Beside him lay the sea, in front was the shining bay without bridge or ferry, with no boat sailing, and he was no swimmer; he must turn inland and go trudging round the bay if he wanted to get on.

Toby made for the three trees on the bank, and, sitting in their pleasant shade, watching the waves coming in long woolly sleeves from the sea, he pondered upon the mystery of Pink Furniture. The Book of Wisdom was found, but it did not enlighten him, it only confused; it was a stupid book. He got it out of his pocket and opened it.

'Where is Pink Furniture?'

No reply.

'Bah, what a stupid book!' he cried, shaking it. 'Why don't you answer?'

'Because,' the book unexpectedly printed, 'wisdom

is only for the wise. Define Pink Furniture, and you shall learn where it is to be found.'

Toby paused until the print faded away and then he stammered:

'Why . . . Pink Furniture is furniture that is pink, and I want some for Bridget.'

In a moment or two these words appeared:

'Where is Bridget?'

Toby murmured:

'Bridget is home, where my heart is.'

Then the white page filled with words, and he watched them form a sentence he did not understand: 'From the seed of the rose some day a rose may bloom.'

Then it faded.

'Oh,' groaned Toby, 'you will not tell me what I want to know. I wish you would tell me what you mean.'

'Wisdom,' the book repeated, 'is only for the wise.'

Well, at any rate – thought Toby, replacing the book in his pocket – I have got this bag of riches. He spread out his handkerchief upon the green bank and once more emptied the shining stones upon it. A breeze arose, and the trees above him tossed their long arms to and fro. Toby stared up as they waved above him, and it seemed as if they were coveting the precious jewels. With a smile he counted the gems, three hundred of them, and then replaced the bag in his bosom. Soon, the day being warm, and the sound of the sea mellowing, he

leaned upon his side and fell asleep and dreamed that a bird was pecking out his heart.

Perhaps he slept for an hour. When he awoke, he could not believe his eyes! The sun had moved only a small way onwards, the sea rippled bluely as before, the plain was level, and the bank as green as when he had lain down. But the three trees were gone! There was no sign of them in the landscape or the sea. What was more, the bank on which they had stood was as smooth and tidy as if they had never been there at all. There were simply no trees there, and if he could believe his eyes, there never had been. But he knew! He knew he had lain down to rest in their shade, that they had waved their lissom arms above him in the breeze, three fantastic trees, as solid as rock, as alive as himself. Toby was so startled that he scrambled to his feet and began to walk quietly away; soon he began to hasten, and at last made off inland as fast as he could go. But he had not gone far when he felt in his bosom. O my grief! The bag of gems was gone!

Turning at once he flew back all the way to the green bank and there searched high and low, but he found no sign of the jewels. He scanned the plain, the sea, even the air, but there were no jewels anywhere, nor any tree. Crawling upon the grass he scratched and peered under almost every blade and turned aside each stone, but he found nothing; all trace was gone.

'O my blame!' he groaned in dismay, 'I did not

'He spread out his handkerchief upon the green bank and once more emptied the shining stones upon it.'

kill the giant, it was misfortune. I did not do it on purpose, I did not know. I have been a fool, now I am punished. Pink Furniture is a fraud, the book is no good to me, I found the jewels and I have lost them. My life's years have flown away in days and all is vain. I am good for nothing, I will throw myself in the sea.'

But still he continued to search in the grass and at length he found the jewel bag – but it was empty. Search as he might, he found no more.

'I know!' he cried then. 'I will try the *Open and Ask Me*.'

And he tried it: 'Where are the jewels?'

Then these words came on the book's page:

'In the sea, the earth, and the air.'

No, he could make nothing of that, and he got no other reply.

'What is the use of this rascally book?' Toby shouted. 'What sea? Where? What earth? How? And the air? Jewels do not fly!'

But the book said no more to him.

'The sea!' he mused. 'The sea. How could they be in the sea? And if they were, how could I search the sea? Only a fish could do that. Stay though; once I did look right down into the sea! How was that?'

Soon he remembered the glass yawl that had enabled him to see those wondrous things, and the salmon with the coral ring in its nose. At once he grasped his lodestone – he had not lost that.

'Lodestone, born of rock and fire,
Render me my true desire.'

'I want Mr. Salmon who keeps a bookshop in Hedgehog Market.'

Then he sat down and scanned the horizon for the appearance of a pink sail and a glass yawl. Suddenly he heard a splashing in the sea before him, and there was the salmon poking up its nose with the coral ring and blowing bubbles, but there was no glass yawl.

'What, please?'

'I have lost my jewels,' Toby explained. 'Kindly search the ocean and restore them to me.'

Away went the salmon and for quite a while Toby paced up and down the shore, wondering what had become of the trees, the jewels, the salmon – indeed, he wondered about so many things that time really passed in a flash and there was the salmon again before him with a bird-nest in its mouth. Toby stepped into the water and took the bird-nest, but before he could say, 'What is this?' or even a 'Thanky,' the fish was gone.

Now that nest, Toby saw, was filled with jewels. He counted them over: there were only one hundred. He was very glad to get even so many back, but 'Bless me!' he exclaimed, 'what has become of the other two hundred? I know, I know, I know it! If these were in the sea the others would be in the earth and the air.' And he called upon his lodestone again:

'I want Mr. Fox who keeps a bookshop in Hedgehog Market.'

As he was walking about he spied his old friend galloping towards him across the plain, and soon the fox was before him.

'What is your pleasure, sir?' inquired the fox, slightly waving its fine red tail.

'I have lost my jewels,' explained Toby. 'Kindly search the earth and restore them to me.'

The fox twitched up its nose, sniffed the air, and was soon gone out of sight. Toby remembered the Klacken, and thought of his sweetheart Bridget, so time passed pleasantly, and behold! there was the fox come back with a bird-nest in its mouth.

Toby received the nest and said, 'I am much obliged to you.'

'The trouble is mine,' answered the fox, gnashing his teeth pleasantly, and was gone in a twink.

Well, that nest also was filled with one hundred jewels, so Toby knew how to get at the remainder. Sure enough, in a little time along came Mr. Owl, the bookseller from Hedgehog Market, with his spylass under his wing.

'What do you want?' inquired the owl sourly.

'I have lost some jewels,' said Toby. 'Would you be so kind as to search the air and restore them to me?'

The owl put his spyglass up to his eye and surveyed the view. It was a very good view. Then he

put the spyglass back under his wing and, without singing or saying anything, away he went.

'I wish the old boy was not so stuck-up,' muttered Toby.

So then he thought of the little Prince of Purganda, and determined to go to see him as soon as ever he could. Then he thought of the Princess Priceless, then Tattle, then Battle, then Purge, and he had just begun to think of Purgatory when back flew the owl, and of course it had got a bird-nest in its beak with the rest of the jewels in it. So Toby thought he would really make an effort to be nice to that owl.

Says he, with deep respect: 'I am sorry to have put you to this trouble, kind sir. I thank you very much, very much indeed.'

'Fool!' sneered the owl, and away he flew without so much as a good afternoon.

Of course Toby did not feel unhappy about that; he had got all his precious stones again; he had got them back from the sea and earth and air, just as the book had predicted, but he could not make head or tail of these events. First he had his jewels, and then his jewels were gone. There stood three trees, and now there were none. And here were three bird-nests from earth and sea and sky. What could anybody make of it?

He took out the Book of Wisdom.

'Honourable volume,' he said, 'pray enlighten me.'

The book thereupon printed the explanation for him, as thus:

'There were three great thieves of old, the thief of the air, the thief of the earth, the thief of the sea, whom none could catch or destroy because at a breath of danger they could change their forms into some innocent likeness and thus escape. So, too, when they were hatching their mischiefs they took upon themselves an innocent likeness and deceived their victims. But by and by a great hero, in revenge of their deceits, curtailed their villainy by depriving them of their human characters and appearances, and now they can change into nothing but fish, flesh, and fowl, or the growths of forest and plain; they can return no more to the likeness of men. Yet thievish dreams continue to warp their minds, and although their thefts are profitless – for what use are riches to bird, fish, or tree? – they have the will to go on thieving for ever.

'You did not guess when sitting under the three trees that they were the three great thieves of the world. Having no hands they could not gather up your jewels, but they told the birds who nested in their branches to fetch them, and the birds filled a nest in each tree. One tree then changed into a conger-eel and, with a nest in its mouth, glided into the water of the bay and hid in a grotto under the sea. The salmon drove it away and recovered the nest of jewels. The second tree turned into a badger and placed a nest in a hole in the earth,

whence the fox regained it. The third became a condor and flew with the nest to the highest crag on a mountain, but the owl obtained it. The three stealers are now gone upon another mischief.'

Night coming on, Toby pursued his journey, but darkness overtook him and weariness overcame him. So he flung himself down upon the soft turf beside the sea and tried to sleep. But indeed he could not sleep for thinking of many things – the three stealers, the giant, the faun, and the golden hair of Bridget, his sweetheart.

'Oh,' he sighed, 'if only I had a book to read, it would compose my mind and help to while away these hours! But I have no book, and my thoughts go scampering over me like mice in a black garret. Though, of course, I *have* got a book, but it is filled with blank pages, and there is no moon to see by.'

Nevertheless he thrust his hand into his pocket to fetch the book. When he opened it, there was a glow of light shining from every page.

'Oh,' sighed Toby, 'if only there were something to read in this book! I would like to read, yes, I would love to read some story about a beautiful girl with golden hair.'

At once the page he was looking at covered itself with fine, clear print that he could read easily in the mysterious glow the book gave out, and there and then he began to read the story of Rakny, until his eyes closed and he slept the night through.

CHAPTER XXVI

RAKNY

LONG ago there lived a dyer in a garden by the sea, and he had an only daughter, as sweet as a cherry, who was called Rakny. The dyer made the child a swing out of cedar and ropes of flax and tied it on a medlar tree in the garden, but day by day Rakny would rather lie in the grass and watch the spiders weave their delicate webs from bough to bough on the bushes of tamarisk. At early morn the webs were embossed with pearls of dew like necklaces for queens, but the sun dried them soon, and as often as the strands were torn by the wind the spiders drew other coils from their bodies and wove them anew. Ugly and hairy the spiders were, but Rakny heeded that not at all, neither did she ill-treat them nor break their webs; she treated them with affection, and they were friendly to her.

When Rakny came of an age the dyer said to her one day:

'My daughter, you are now of an age. What art shall I teach you, that you may live long and happily in the world?'

Rakny answered: 'Father, teach me to be a weaver.'

'Day by day Rakny would rather lie in the grass and watch the spiders weave their delicate webs.'

'You have chosen well,' said the dyer. 'I will teach you.'

And her father taught her to weave until she threw the shuttle swiftly and surely, and excelled all in the beauty of her cloth. But she was still not satisfied, and said to the dyer: 'Father, teach me to weave as neatly as the spiders.'

'Alas, my daughter,' the dyer answered, 'I cannot do that. They alone can teach you their secrets.'

So Rakny went to the spiders, and because she loved them and treated them with courtesy they revealed many of their secrets to her, but not all.

As she grew up, Rakny became the most lovely maiden in the land. Her golden hair, as fine as the finest floss, grew so abundantly that she girdled the heavy plaits about her waist like a garland. The noblest gentlemen courted her for marriage, yet she took no care for the things of love, but only strove to excel in the art of weaving. As she was still ambitious, she went often to the spiders, who taught her their secrets until, at last, the queen spider told her there was only one more secret for her to learn from them.

'Pray tell me that secret,' said Rakny. But the queen spider would not reveal it there and then, and answered: 'All in good time, Rakny.'

Not long afterwards a great queen from afar paid a visit to Rakny's country on matters of state,

and among the queen's retinue there came riding a young man called Collinel, as sweet as an ash sapling and fresh as a new green leaf in the woods of spring. All the maidens of the land save Rakny vied for his love, but Rakny was too proud. As for Collinel, the queen was fond of him and therefore he did not dare to accept the love of any.

It was the custom then to make gifts to all royal visitors, and Rakny, being so skilful in weaving, thought to weave a shirt for Collinel. Being moved to make it the most beautiful shirt that mortal hands had ever woven, she went to the spiders and said:

'I must weave a shirt for Prince Collinel. Tell me, therefore, your last secret, that I may weave for him the most beautiful garment ever woven.'

But the spiders said: 'Why, no, we cannot do this unless you become one of us.' And they would not tell her their last secret.

For three days Rakny sulked and sighed, and then said to the spiders a second time:

'I must weave a shirt for Prince Collinel. Confide to me the secret.'

The spiders said 'No,' unless she became one of them they would not confide it to her.

Again Rakny used three days in grief, and on the seventh day she went to the spiders again and desired them to yield up the secret.

They answered her: 'If we tell you this, you too must become as we are.'

Rakny said: 'Tell me, then; but as I have to weave this shirt for Collinel, give me a little time before I pay the price.'

So they told their last secret to Ranky, and it was this:

'All our thread is spun from our own bodies. Do the same and you will excel all mortal weavers.'

So Rakny went and took apart her long locks of golden hair with a shearing knife, and wove from them a shirt for Prince Collinel and sent it to him.

The youth put it on his body, and straightway his heart grew full of longing for the love of Rakny, and he pined and became so silent that the great queen questioned him, and asked him often why he pined and was silent. At last he confessed it was because of his great desire to wed Rakny the weaver.

'A common weaver!' The queen was angry indeed. 'What kittle-cattle!'

'But the most cunning weaver in all the land,' answered Collinel, 'and the most lovely maiden.'

The queen spoke disparagingly and desired Rakny to come to her. So Rakny went to the queen, and when Collinel stood before the young weaver and touched her hand, both their poor hearts trembled and neither could speak for bliss. The queen rudely parted them, and said to Rakny:

'You are a weaver of spells, it seems.'

Rakny hung her head and was silent.

'What trash do you weave?' the queen asked, and Rakny replied:

'Nay, I weave only things of beauty.'

'Indeed!' cried the haughty queen. 'I, too, can weave. Can you weave better than I, a queen, who have woven the dreams of paradise that wander in the world?'

'Yes,' answered Rakny with pride. 'I can weave the dreams of the world that will dwell in paradise. You have looms here; let us each weave a cloth, and your people shall decide between us.'

'We will soon put your brags to the proof,' replied the queen.

So the queen and the weaver sat down at the looms and for many days they wove diligently, and when the cloths were finished the queen held up her weaving with a smile. The cloth was purple, peopled with strange patterns, and around it was a fringed border with the figure of an owl often repeated. All the courtiers said it was the most beautiful cloth ever woven, none could surpass it.

But when Rakny held up her cloth all were at first silent for fear of offending the queen. Then one by one they began to murmur with delight, and at last all shouted their praises: 'This is indeed the triumph of all!' For Rakny had woven a cloth of gold from her own hair, and made a likeness upon

it of Collinel riding, and around it was a fringed border with the figure of a spider often repeated.

When the great queen, who was very wise, saw that Rakny had conquered, she asked: 'Who taught you to weave thus?'

Rakny said: 'My father.'

'You lie!' cried the queen, and snatching the cloth of gold from Rakny's hands, she tore it into shreds.

Rakny shook with grief and shame, and ran weeping from the palace into the courtyard, across the courtyard into the street, and along the streets she fled home to the dyer's garden. There she unloosed the swing of cedar from the medlar tree and knotted a loop of the ropes around her white neck, but before she could hang herself the ropes themselves changed into webs like those that hung on the tamarisk bushes. In a moment Rakny felt her limbs fall from her and her body change into a spider, all gold.

And there in a web beneath the medlar tree she dwelt alone until time consumed her.

CHAPTER XXVII

WILLIPINK

UP rose Toby in the early morn and went on his way, but though he travelled far and long the bay continued; the opposite shore came closer and closer, but he could find no means to approach it.

'I wish,' said he, 'I could cross this water. To be sure, there is nothing over there except rocks and cliffs, but I would like to be across this water. It is beautiful and blue, these fields are smooth and green, the sun shines and the birds are calling, yet I want to cross this water and push on.'

By and by he came to the corner of the bay, and there he found a bridge, all lovely, crossing two little rivers that were running into the bay just there. He had never seen anything so enchanting as this lovely bridge, for being made of beryl it was faintly blue and sparkled like crystal. It had two arches, one bestriding the stream that had water coloured like pearl, and the other spanning a stream that had black water. Toby walked to the middle of the bridge, and when he looked over the far side of it he saw a man with a black rod angling in the white water. There was no float on his fishing-line,

but ever so often a little bell would ring and up came a black fish on the hook. The man unhooked the fishes and threw them across into the black stream. So with the other river: a man sat fishing up white fish from the black stream, and cast them across into the white river.

'Hoi!' Toby called to these men after watching them awhile, 'what are you doing that for?'

The men looked up at him without curiosity, and shaking their heads wearily they answered both together:

'We do not know.'

'Huh!' grunted Toby. 'Why is this stream black and that stream white?'

The men said: 'We do not know.'

'O cramb be good to us!' cried Toby. 'Can you tell me the way to the harbour?'

Again the men replied: 'We do not know.'

Toby began to be stupidly angry with them. He called out: 'Do you know anything at all?'

And they answered: 'No. Nobody knows.'

Toby laughed at them jeeringly: 'Haw! haw! haw!'

Calmly the two men went on catching white fish and black, and hurling them back into their proper streams. At last they interrogated Toby.

'Why are you watching us?'

And he said: 'I do not know.'

'What do you want then?'

Toby thought a moment and replied: 'I am after Pink Furniture. What do you know about that?'

They both said at once: 'We know nothing.'

Toby sighed: 'No. Nobody knows.'

The man by the black stream said: 'What is Pink Furniture?'

' I do not know,' answered Toby.

After a while the man by the white stream asked: 'Where is Pink Furniture?'

And Toby could only answer: 'I do not know.'

'Then how are you going to find it?' both fishermen asked together.

'I do not know,' replied Toby.

'What will you do with it when you do find it?' they again asked.

And Toby said: 'Alas, I do not know.'

Whereupon the white fisherman glanced at the black one, and 'Haw! haw! haw!' they both laughed together.

'Fools!' cried Toby. 'Don't you know that the only things worth seeking are the things we do not know!'

'To be sure!' they both replied scornfully. 'We had never thought of that.'

Toby found he was perspiring with rage at these uncivil beings, so he spoke to them no more, but passed on over the bridge. There a road began that led into a ravine with bare green hills on either side, and he walked along it. Soon the cliffs and

the bay and the lovely bridge were hidden behind him, and then he came up with a black sailor in a yellow striped singlet with a harpoon in his belt, walking the same way.

Says the sailor to him: 'Whidder bound, massa?'

'To the docks,' answered Toby.

'De docks it is,' said the black sailor. They travelled on together, talking of their adventures, and the black sailor said his name was Willipink.

'De Willipinks de best sort a people, sah. Some yoh white people tink black people best dead, or no better, but de Willipinks very good fellers. White people is all right 'cept dey smells.'

'Smell!' protested Toby.

'Dat so, sah. Jus befoh ah met yoh ah was bound to sniff de air. Very stink stuff dis morning – ah says – must be some dead bodily bout here. But yoh kent help dat, honey, tis de Lawd. And dey lies! Oh my!'

'Lies!' protested Toby again.

'Dass so, honey. I chop one tin a jam for a polly ober on dat island. Dis Willipink's good feller, nebber soil his mouf wid dem blasphemious words. Ah says, dat swearing got be done by some udder feller cos ah done go fer to meet ole Satan bimeby. Ah chop a tin a jam for one polly ober in dat island. But dat polly nebber gib one swear at all, sah! Not one lil cuss!'

After a little while Toby said:

'Say, Willipink, did you ever come across any Pink Furniture?'

'Peenk fuhnichoa!'

'Yes,' said Toby.

'Fuhnichoa?'

'Yes, furniture.'

'Peenk?'

'Yes, pink.'

'What foh you want dat peenk fuhnichoa, sah?'

'I only just wanted to know,' explained Toby.

'Well, may be dere is. It sure sound most sinful, honey. Dis Willipink nebber had no fuhnichoa 'tall, 'cept dat polly, and ah chop her quick for a quivalent.'

'Quivalent?'

'Yas, a yuke.'

'What is a yuke?' inquired Toby.

'Dass a musical implement, sah.'

Saying which, Willipink unslung one from his shoulder and strummed away:

'O de black man's bones, his bones, is white.
Cut along . . . you people.
But a goose done lay in de middle ob de night.
Hop along . . . O my!

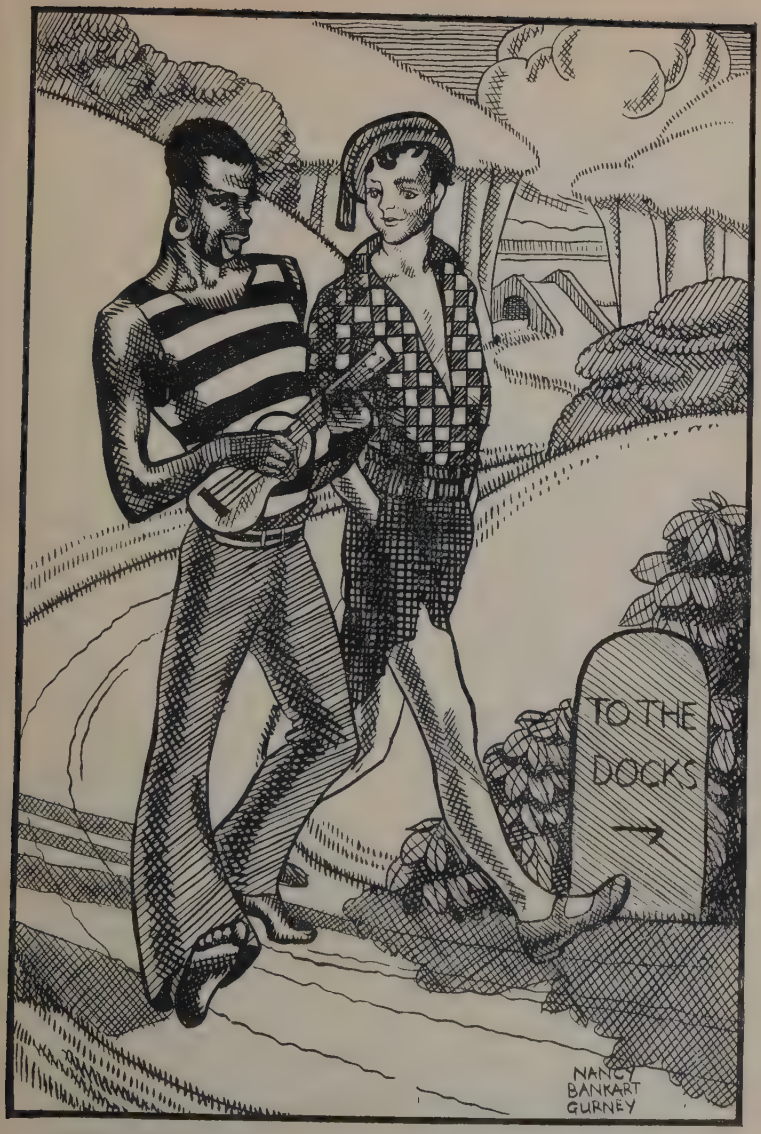
O de black man's blood, his blood, is red.
Cut along . . . you people.
Be sho' you libbing befoh you dead.
Hop along . . . O my!

O de black man's coin, his coin, will pay.
Cut along . . . you people.
Put a collar on de calf what strays away.
Hop along . . . O my!

O de black man's lub, his lub, is strong.
Cut along . . . you people.
Youse holler foh de sweet, but what about de wrong?
Hop along . . . O my!

O de black man's heart, his heart, is true.
Cut along . . . you people.
If de fire done burn, you kin whistle up de flue.
Hop along . . . Oh my!'

They went on together until they came to the docks, and then Toby sold one of his precious stones to an old Jew for a bag full of money. He gave Willipink a handful of it, and then they parted. The first thing Toby did then was wash himself, very much, all over, in the sea, and then he went buying himself a grand rich suit for a man, and then he threw away his old boyish rags, and then he ate some pie, and then he took the first boat to the Island of Purganda.



'Willipink unslung one from his shoulder and strummed away.'

CHAPTER XXVIII

PRINCESS PRICELESS

NOW, while he was sailing across the sea back to the Island of Purganda, Toby wondered much how things were shaping in that troubled country. For you must remember that since he entered the Garden of the Secret, seven or eight years had elapsed in a very short time. It would be useful if somebody would pretty soon write a new book to explain why time passes so much more quickly in regions of enchantment. You seem to pop through a month or two while having breakfast, and by tea-time your hair has grown elbow-long and you have forgotten your sins. It ought to be a nice book like *The Four Housemaids of the Acropolis*, by some nice person like Georgina Pullet, with a nice, scatty title like *Spit Twice and be Blowed*. Toby had grown into a young man now, and, of course, the little prince would be a young man now, and the Princess Priceless would be a young woman now. Much would not be exactly the same, very much would be quite otherwise, and therefore a little, one way or the other, was bound to be more or less entirely different, so to speak. But when he got to Purganda he was more surprised than you might think possible, but of course it *was* possible because the changes *were* changed although he could hardly believe his eyes.

For the streets were full of women and girls in the most divine clothes. Once on a time they had been dressed like sacks, now they were like sirens. There were just as many men and boys as before, and they were clad as beautifully as before, but Toby was used to them. He was not used to the others. And everybody was happy, chattering, laughing, even dancing along, and not a soul was reading! There did not seem to be such a thing as a book in the place; you might well think there never had been, and, if the luck was in it, never would be. Toby too was dressed most richly, but in a different fashion from the Purgandians, and therefore he was much observed by all. When he came to the palace he could not see a soldier anywhere, and Toby was much glad, because he never could understand why the king should have anything so idiotic as a soldier stuck just outside his parlour window. Up to the porch he goes, rings the bell, and the same old janitor opens to him; he was not reading, and he smiled as he invited Toby to enter.

'Your name, friend?'

Toby told him that.

'Your business, friend?'

'I have come to see the prince. I was once his N.C.'

'I remember you,' said the janitor. 'It is the king you want to see. His father died before the late wars and the prince has succeeded him. You have grown, sir, but you have not changed. Come, you will be welcome.'

So he hung a placard round Toby's neck – that custom had not been altered:

> OLD FRIEND COME TO SEE KING

and away they went to the king's chamber where the sealing-wax motto hung over the door. The janitor ushered Toby into the room.

At the king's table sat a most lovely maiden with a small coronet on her head. Her hair was fluffy and yellow, like the down in a gosling. Beside her sat a fine young man with a nice large crown on his head. The lovely lady majestically beckoned Toby forward by crooking her forefinger at him, but when he drew nearer both she and the young man sprang to their feet together and shouted: 'It is Toby!' Dashing their crowns on the floor they both ran and embraced him and exchanged kisses.

'Prince!'

'Toby!'

'Toby!'

'Priceless!'

'Where have you been?'

'You have not changed.'

'Tell us quickly!'

'What has happened?'

'You are quite a man.'

'You are beautiful.'

'So you have not forgotten me!'

'I have had wonderful adventures.'

'So have we!'

'I am king now,' said the young man shyly.

'But I do all the ruling,' the princess declared.

'I have my picture on the postage stamps,' added the king.

'But I reckon up the gum and the paper, and tell him how much he has to sell them for,' said she. 'Oh, curse this idiotic placard! We shall have to abolish them, king.'

Snatching the placard from Toby's neck she flung it down and it fell beside her coronet. The princess caught up her coronet again and popped it on Toby's head.

'Toby!' shouted Priceless, embracing him once more. 'You are very much like a duke, and I do so want to marry you. How are you situated now?'

'Princess,' Toby said hastily, 'you know I am pledged to Bridget.'

'Toby Tottel,' she retorted, 'you know you are nothing of the kind.'

'Well,' he explained, 'I have always felt myself pledged to Bridget.'

'Oh, curse the wretch!' sighed she. 'But please yourself. You are the one extravaganza of my life. I wish she was dead. All the same, how is she?'

'I have not seen her,' he replied, 'since I left home all those years ago. And I have not heard from her.'

'Oh, then,' said the princess, 'she is dead, I am sure.'

'No,' said Toby.

'Or she has married, it is certain.'

'No,' said Toby.

'She has forgotten you, there is no doubt.'

'No,' said Toby.

'But why not, in the name of guile and gusto! She has had every chance in the world to forget you, and every reason, too.'

'Yes, every chance and reason,' Toby answered, 'but none of them would content Bridget.'

'I do wish you were not so infatuated,' Priceless complained. 'But you must please yourself – I insist upon that.'

Toby felt so very foolish that it was a relief to talk to the prince who was now king. The king told him all about his coronation. Toby told the king all about *The Bag of Nuts*, the giant, the faun, and the Princess of Patcat. Thereupon Priceless told Toby an amazing story of a powerful Mogul who was perishing to marry her. The king told Toby there was not a single word of truth in this, that there was not even a Mogul. So then Priceless cursed her brother, and told him he was no end of a fool, and the king looked as if that might be true.

'Would you believe it, Toby,' she continued, 'but after you ran away from us he was always losing his blood-alley, and I always had to find it!'

'How did you manage to do so?' he asked,

'Oh, I followed your methods and did as you taught me when you found it the first time, you remember, in the kettle. On Toby Rigs the king now presents the most beautiful maiden with a gold marble and a silver kettle, and then she has to have her face blackened in memory of Mogo.'

'But what are Toby Rigs?'

'It is not an *are*, it is an *it*. It is the national holiday, the anniversary of the revolution and the same day as you found the blood-alley.'

'Revolution!' cried Toby. 'Oh, tell me! I have heard nothing of that.'

'Oh, look at us!' Priceless said. 'Do but perceive me and note the change. Am I not dressed gaily?'

'You are indeed,' he replied. 'Everything is different. The men's garments are as gay as ever, but the women's are gayer. And nobody seems to read now!'

'Excellent!' Priceless said. 'It is all due to the lunatics and me!'

'Tell me,' exclaimed Toby, 'tell me how.'

'Yes,' interrupted the king, 'tell him all. Let us sit down.'

So they sat down and Priceless began the narration of all that had happened since Toby had fled.

'You knew, of course,' said Priceless, 'that the nightmare in our land was the vast number of lunatics. There were twice as many insane as there were sane, and the problem was rapidly making us all as mad as the others. Something had to be done.

Well, two years ago a crisis came. Snooping Barnacle declared that the only remedy for this tragic state of affairs was to diet the lunatics, and the question was whether their victuals were to be boiled or whether they should be baked. The Barnacles said "Baked," and the Anti-Barnacles said "Boiled," and the disputants became so ferocious that they were on the point of resorting to the custom of killing each other patriotically, when our dear papa died. That quelled the tumult for a time, but Snooping declined to let prince govern, and began to enforce his own decrees. But he reckoned without *me*,' cried Priceless, with a shrill laugh. 'I had some ideas about the question. You remember you once told me the cause of all the lunacy, and its remedy. . . .'

'I don't remember doing so, princess,' interposed Toby.

'What! Have you forgotten that?' The princess could hardly credit him. 'Well, I called a Convention of the People, and I spoke to them for hours; nobody could stop me, and I told them all you once told me. I said it was no use tinkering with an evil, it must be uprooted. If the tooth aches, out with it. The cause of all our lunacy was books, and the cause of all our blindness was reading. You remember telling me *that*, don't you?'

No, Toby did not remember.

'Oh dear, oh dear,' the princess raged. 'I am certain I did not dream it! Anyway, I declared that

the only certain remedy was to abolish all books and suppress all authors. Of course there was a terrific howl, but the Anti-Barnacles supported me and the Convention broke up in wrath. The Bars said the Antibars ought to be boiled alive, and the Antibars retorted that the Bars would be much better if they were baked stone-dead. Within a week the Bars and the Antibars had organised a pretty little war, and were out on the Fighting Plain teaching each other – so they said – a lesson. It appeared to be a lesson in the art of extermination, and all were most enthusiastic, but I could not waste time on them just then. I said to myself: "Come on, you weeping Barnacle! At last I am going to deal with you!" But as it chanced, poor old Snooping just then went hopelessly mad and had to be sent to the asylum. He thought he was a loaf of bread, and begged everybody to cut a slice off him and toast it. No sooner was he taken off than the prince appointed me to the vacant office and I became the prop of Purganda. What did I do first? I let the Bars and the Antibars go on with their fighting, while I abolished all their books and suppressed the authors on both sides. At home, of course, all the book people said: "We will not *be* suppressed."

'"Very well," I said, "then you will be abolished."

'They replied that the abolition of writers would ruin the country.

'I said: "The country is already ruined."

'They complained: "If you suppress reading, our occupation will be gone. What is to become of us?"

'I said: "You can go and practise the art of extermination, or you can go on writing for the lunatics."

' "But the lunatics *won't* read," they pointed out.

'I said: "That does not matter in the least. And there are the blind."

' "But they *can't* read."

' "So much the better," I said.

'Then the whole lot of the booksters wept, and demanded compensation.

' "What!" I said, "compensation for not being allowed to ruin your country! It is reading that has driven our people mad or blind. Our literature therefore *must* be foul, and I abolish it. Every writer is a menace."

'They said: "It is you who will ruin the country."

'So I said: "Well, if the country is to be ruined, it had better be ruined by me than by that atrocious toad, Snooping Barnacle."

'I got quite a following and, as I tell you, I became the sole prop of Purganda. I offered the ruined booksters state support, but naturally they declined it.'

'Why ever?' demanded Toby.

'Because the only state support was in the lunatic asylum, and none of them wanted to go there before their time. So I ignored them, and abolished books and suppressed reading. All books were rounded up

and burnt. That was on Toby Rigs, the anniversary of the day you found his blood-alley. No sooner was the change made than the people embraced it gladly. A wrench at first, but they were loyal, and they quickly grew to like the change. You see the men, having no books to look at, had to look at something so they looked at us – the women – and as we were rather awful to look at, they insisted on our wearing newer and gayer garments. Then they saw we were nice, and now they can't stop looking at us and admiring us. Naturally the women like that, and so nearly everybody is happy. By the way, how does that Princess of Patcat dress, Toby? What does she look like?'

'Oh,' answered he, 'she looks all right.'

'Is she beautiful?'

'Not bad. I think so.'

'What colour hair?'

'Not fair, and not very dark.'

'Her eyes?'

'Well, I didn't notice. Ordinary.'

'Is she married?'

'No.'

'Did she like you, Toby?'

'She was quite polite to me.'

'She must be a freak. I wish you would not keep on talking about her and interrupting me. Where was I? Oh, the two silly armies went on killing. On principle, of course. They settled nothing, except

large quantities of each other. I had ample time to get on with the reconstruction at home here. Prince helped me, he was wonderful.

'After we had abolished books and suppressed authors, I tackled the lunacy question. In far back ages – I said to another Convention – our lunatics were few in number and charming in kind. They were strange, curious, whimsical, like monkeys or kittens; kind people adopted them. But now, lunacy is contagious and even kind people go mad. There are twice as many madmen as there are sane people, and the burden of their support has brought us at last to the brink of ruin. Our armies are fighting about the proper way to feed them just at the moment when we can feed them no more. I tell you – I said – the question is not how, why, or when the lunatics are to be fed, whether on baked or boiled; the question is whether we can continue to feed them at all. That was the line I took, Toby dear, and it pointed to the solution you yourself gave me years ago.'

'I really don't remember anything about it, princess.'

'How you do infuriate me!' she cried. 'You *know* it was you. Well, it took a little time to convince everybody, but as it was a case not of sinking *or* swimming, because you had not a chance even of swimming, I took the bull by the horns and abolished the lunatics.'

'Didn't they protest?'

'There were no complaints. Every one accepted the inevitable, and no one regrets it now. When that was over I cut off all supplies from the gallant armies, and they came panting home like lambs. Neither side had won anything, both had cost and lost a lot, they were too hungry to continue the contest, and too miserable to protest when they heard that the great burden no longer existed. Indeed they were all secretly delighted, though some were also rather resentful to find they had after all been fighting for nought.'

'But,' interrupted Toby, 'what became of the lunatics? How can you abolish a lunatic?'

'Oh,' said Princess Priceless. 'We did just what you once told me ought to be done. We began with Snooping Barnacle, and painlessly and peacefully pole-axed the lot of them.'

'Lack-o-body me!' Toby was rather surprised.

'Oh, but you told me that was the very thing to do,' the princess insisted. 'And, do you know, we could not think of a better way.'

'But,' protested Toby, 'I only said it in fun.'

'We found it very useful advice,' said she.

'Of course, I did not mean it!' he declared. 'And I had forgotten it until now.'

'Ah!' said she, 'we had neither chance nor reason to forget. I remembered. And you tell me you did not mean it. Hey, diddle diddle, that is rather a pity!'

Toby stopped with his royal friends for some days, and they all went hunting or dancing or, when it rained, visited the museum. There, next to the king's first cough-drop, is now to be seen the famous blood-alley, a sample of soot, a specimen of kettle ash, the ginger-beer label, and an account of the birth, life, and disappearance of Mogo the Blackamoor. The painting of 'The Pink Chair' had been removed to the asylum, where many of the poor inmates fractured their pelvises trying to sit on it, and its place in the museum was now taken by a 'Portrait of the Cook's Kettle,' which is commonly held to be the nobler work of the two.

Then came the day when all these good friends said their farewells, and Toby departed on his backward journey, having made up his mind that there was nothing to be gained by further seeking. A strong instinct was drawing him homewards. He had two of his finest gems made into earrings for the Princess Priceless, and when they parted for ever, Toby hung one on each of her ears, and kissed her as he did so.

'Good-bye,' said she. 'I do think too much of you. I wish you were my very own lunatic. Good-bye. Here is a thing for that creature you are so absurdly fond of.' And she hung around his neck a wonderful necklace of gold. 'Give it to her, and good-bye. Remember me.'

CHAPTER XXIX

BRIDGET

AFTER another sea voyage Toby got to land, where he bought a fine black Arab horse. Two of its feet were white, and it was shod with silver shoes. Its tail was as long as Rakny's hair, its eyes were like two new chestnuts. Bells jingled on the bridle, and the saddle was of scarlet hide. They made off at great speed in the direction of Hedgehog Market, but, do you know, he could not find it, though he found the river with the soapstone bridge, and there was Warlock Wood high on the hill where the Forester lived. Here where the town had been was only a vacant field. Gone were the grand bookshops, the little market, the booths, the fine quilly hogs, the drovers, the epitaph woman; all gone, and he never found them again. On the middle of the soapstone bridge he stayed his Arabian horse for a moment and dismounted. Drawing the lodestone from his pocket he murmured:

'*Lodestone, born of rock and fire,*
Render me my true desire.'

And called for the fish, the fox, the bird, but he called in vain. Nothing answered, nothing happened, and as he held the lodestone there it suddenly

leapt from his grasp, over the parapet, and plunged into the blue river, where it sank without sound or splash. Sadly he realised what had happened: he had resigned the search, he had turned back, and those dreams were leaving him for ever. Yet still above all dreams there remained the one reality that was both dream and truth, his sweetheart Bridget, and he pressed on. Up to Warlock Wood he now urged his horse, and was there astonished to find it was no very great forest but only a bit of a wood, a mere copse, with very ordinary trees and a very ordinary warning to trespassers. In a short time he had ridden right through it, having seen no forester or unicorn, and heard neither song nor bugle blithely blown. Alas! all these had abandoned him.

Riding on he came at length in sight of Cobbs Mill. When he beheld it upon its hill he felt that, at least, that was true. But when he drew nigh he perceived it had shrunken and sagged, the sails no longer turned on the bright breeze, and the miller's cot was empty.

For awhile he rested there and took out *The Open and Ask Me*. Alas! the Book of Wisdom looked more shrivelled than ever, and its blank pages remained blank, making no answers to his many questions; it might just have been an old notebook without any notes. Somehow he knew it would never answer him again. And then the necklace from Princess Priceless: when he examined it now it

'He knew he had come to his journey's end and hope.'

was but a string of common shells with no gold at all. And the little sack of jewels! Hey, praise the fates! They were all right. They were all right because they were the price of his lost dreams. Only these were left him; he had come away from the enchanted isles. Well, no one can dream for ever – and it was a good price he had got.

Toby sprang upon his Arabian horse and galloped on until he came in sight of the common. Again he dismounted and tied his horse to a tree. It was a glowing afternoon; he could hear cuckoos calling over the common, and the hard raps which the beaters gave their carpets. His aunt's garden was billowy with white washing – she had a flourishing trade now. By and by a young woman came along with her sleeves rolled up and a large basket braced under her arm. As she approached him, Toby saw that she was altogether lovely, with hair like the down on a gosling, and he knew he had come to his journey's end and hope.

'Is it you?' said she.

'Yes,' he answered.

'How grand you have grown!'

The basket dropped beside them.

'My love has come,' she murmured through her joyful tears. 'Oh, keep me in your arms. Kiss me again, keep on kissing me.'

By and by, as they swayed together, he trod upon that basket.

'Why do you carry this thing?' he asked.

'It is the washing basket,' she answered, and explained: 'I help your aunt in her business now. Have you really come home?'

'Yes, I have come home where my heart is,' said Toby Tottel.

'And have you found Pink Furniture?' she slyly inquired.

'No,' he answered. 'Is there any here?'

'It will be pink again,' said Bridget, with wooing eyes, 'now you have come. It will be so again.'

And when they got to his aunt's cottage sure enough the furniture there was radiantly pink.

'Yes, do you see!' cried Bridget.

'I see it all now,' he replied. 'I have found it here.'

And he knew then that what he had been seeking for the world over was there at his very home with his love beside him; it had never been anywhere else. Pride of youth had lured and misled him. The faun had told him true, and the Book of Wisdom had not lied.

So he married Bridget, and they dwelt in a house full of *real* pink furniture. How did it come to be really pink? Why, he had it *made* pink; it is easy enough to have pink furniture if you want it so. And he gave Bridget the *Open and Ask Me* to keep for her washing-book.

THE END

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Coppard, A. E. 1878-1957

Pink furniture

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